

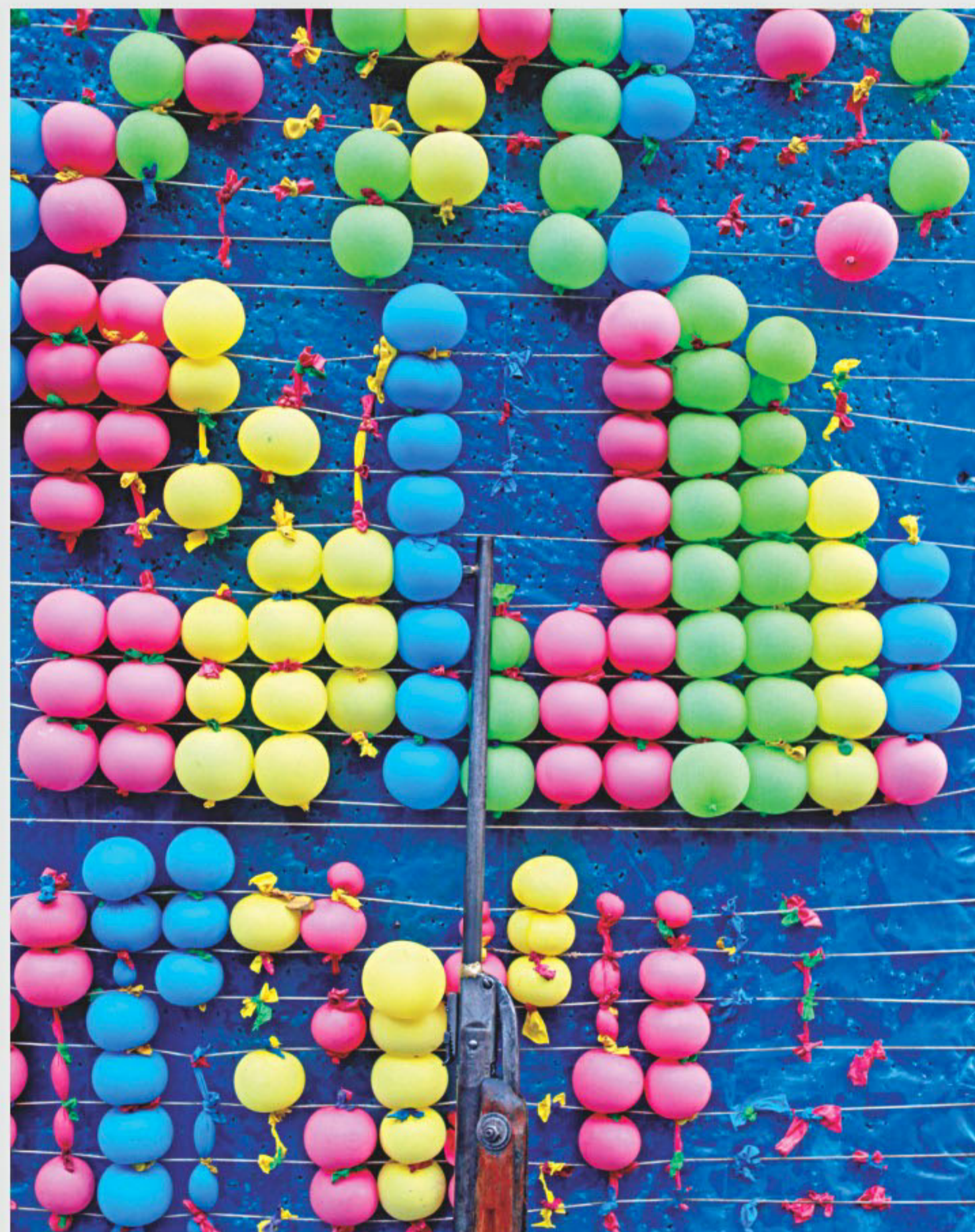
PLACES TO BE, THINGS TO DO



PHOTOS: DARSHAN CHAKMA



THE DEFINITIVE YOUTH MAGAZINE
SHOUT



NOVO MANZOOR

Dhaka is the largest and most important city in Bangladesh. Safe to say, it offers more in entertainment options than probably any other part of the country. But sadly, that doesn't seem apparent from current trends.

For most of the youth in Dhaka, a hangout plan with friends tends to begin and end at a food place. That's bound to get boring, right? The thing is, there are plenty of fun activities available around Dhaka. And I am not even talking about the most obvious ones like going to the movies, amusement parks, concerts or festivals! Here are some activities that should make your next outing with friends a lot more fun:

GO-KART RACING

Xtreme Racing is the only go-kart track in the Dhaka area. Channel your inner F1 racer in a variety of available go-karts. The adrenaline rush one can get from completing a perfect lap around the circuit is second to none. And just like Need for Speed, you don't need to worry about gears. Just accelerate, brake and turn your way to the fastest lap!

There are three variants of karts with different speeds. The fastest one can reach speeds up to 60 km/h.

Pro tip: Put on all the safety gear, just in case. And turning the corners without braking will induce drift. Difficult to master, but feels great to pull off.

Where: Xtreme Racing is situated in Ashulia, adjacent to Fantasy Kingdom.

When: Open everyday, usually 11 AM – 8 PM.

Cost: Varies depending on the karts you can drive. Depending on kart speed, a 6 minute drive will cost you Tk. 400-800. And a 12 minute drive will cost Tk. 700-1400. Don't forget to get your lap times charted for extra bragging rights!

Cons: The long distance from Dhaka proper and the high cost are pretty much the only cons.

BOWLING

Rightfully considered one of the best and most 'chill' hangout activities. The best thing about the game is that it is very easy to pick up, and the format allows friends to pair up and square off. And the scoring system makes most games competitive.

See if you can get a strike by dropping all the pins, and laugh at your friends when they land the ball in the gutters!

Pro tip: Wear sneakers to the alley or you will be forced to take smelly, used bowling shoes. And don't drop the heavy bowling balls on your toe. It has been known to happen.

Where: Used to be available at Rifles, but now Player's Club in Jamuna Future Park is the only place with a proper bowling alley. The place also has pool and billiard boards, as well as karaoke rooms.

When: Player's Club is open on the days JFP is open. JFP is closed on Wednesdays, and has half-day off on Thursdays.

Cost: A single game costs Tk. 350, while a double game costs Tk. 600. Better packages are available for larger groups.

Cons: The place tends to close rather early in the evening. Make sure you have a whole afternoon ahead when you get there.

ICE SKATING

Did you ever catch figure skating on the TV when the Winter Olympics took place? Now you can appreciate first hand just how difficult the whole thing truly is, by

landing on your backside a hundred times.

Ice skating is not easy and you are bound to make a fool of yourself for the first half an hour or so. But once you get the hang of it, you won't want to go back to plain old walking. And going with a group ensures that you don't get laughed at too much.

The rink is made of slippery waxed tiles rather than actual ice, so no need to pack warm clothing. Don't be discouraged by the notion of 'tiles skating' though, the experience can be as fun as skating on actual ice. Plus it hurts much less to land on your behind on the tiles.

Pro tip: Make sure your skating boots are a very tight fit. Choosing a pair of boots that are even slightly loose will make you fall down again and again. And while skating, move your feet on outward angles, rather than straight ahead. That is, push your left foot forward on a slight left angle and vice-versa.

Where: Star Zone in Bashundhara City, adjacent to Star Cineplex.

When: Star Zone, like the rest of Bashundhara city, is open everyday except Tuesday.

Cost: Two hours of skating costs Tk. 300.

Cons: The rink itself is rarely crowded, but the adjacent (and unusually large!) gallery is usually full of spectators whose judging eyes will torment you. Also, the sound system can, and often does, blare out Justin Bieber tracks.

ARCADE GAMING

Remember the peaceful days of skipping school and playing Mustafa (actual name: Cadillacs and Dinosaurs) for hours? Video game arcades happen to be a great choice for friendly hangouts for a few good reasons. One, there is a good competitive element without any risk of injury or even fatigue. Two, a variety of unique games can be played, which all provide vastly different experiences. Lastly, the good, clean fun is a great way to go back to a time when things were much simpler.

Pro tip: Don't ever play the claw-crane game. Just don't.

Where: Among the several arcades of varying sizes around Dhaka, Saad Musa City Center currently contains the largest one. It is situated in the Kuril-Bishwa Road area.

When: The arcade at Saad Musa City Center is usually open from 9AM to 10PM.

Cost: Costs vary in different places. At Saad Musa, Tk. 500 worth of coins and tickets should be enough for a group of 3-4.

Cons: The primarily luck-based video games can cause people to waste coins on them and go home cursing. Also, any arcade, anywhere in the world, will at any time, have a few malfunctioning games. And that will probably include the game you were most interested in in the first place.

GAMING IN CAFÉS

Maybe you don't like the mostly dated games available in arcades. Maybe you think the coin system is too costly, or a bit confusing. Gaming cafés provide the choice of playing modern games on modern machines, while being arguably cheaper than arcades.

One could argue that you can play most of these games from the privacy of your home but the excitement of competing alongside (or against) a large number of friends, in a gamer-friendly environment, is something pretty darn hard to replicate at home.

Pro tip: Pick games you have some level of expertise in. Being a noob in a highly competitive place can be a bit embarrassing!



Where: Several locations, major ones being Club 3 at Dhanmondi 3/A and RAGE at Mohammadpur.

When: Generally open from around 12 PM to 8 PM.

Cost: The usual charge is Tk. 35/hour.

Cons: Smoking and overcrowding at peak hours can make for an annoying experience. Also, things like keyboards and net connection don't work properly on some PCs due to management oversight. Check first to make sure your assigned unit works perfectly.

POOL/SNOOKER

Cue sports have been a popular pastime among the Dhaka youth for some time now. A long day of shooting pool, while casually chatting with familiar faces is a comforting notion to many.

Pro tip: Pay attention to your left hand (or the right, if you are a lefty) when balancing the cue stick on it. Keeping it stable is the key to a fluid hitting motion.

Where: Pool clubs are available all across the city. Just visit the one nearest to your home.

When: Most pool clubs are open from around 10AM to 10PM. Some stay open till midnight.

Cost: Costs vary wildly among different pool clubs. There are two main methods of charging in pool: per game and per hour. The lowest per game charge rate starts from Tk. 30. Per hour charges can range anywhere from Tk. 300 to Tk. 1000, depending on the place.

Pro tip: Hold your breath, line the two iron sights in the front and back of the barrel of the gun, and squeeze the trigger softly without making the gun move. In that order.

Where: Small balloon-shooting galleries are found in many outside locations in Dhaka. Multiple ones can be found around Dhanmondi Lake. Yes, the lakeside environment does add to the experience.

When: As these are portable one-man businesses, the timing can be random. Most shooting galleries will set up shop in the same place every day from noon to evening.

Cost: Rates vary, but usually Tk. 50 will get you 30 shots. Split up half with a friend and compete to see who can burst the most balloons!

Cons: Some of the guns are badly maintained and thus very inaccurate, which will frustrate experienced shooters. Also, crowds can easily form around you in the open environment. That makes it very embarrassing to miss shots widely.

READING

So you've had enough of competitiveness and just want to sit somewhere and read books together for a while. Going over a particularly interesting passage, checking out different books by the same author or just randomly browsing books until you find something that catches your eye- these can all be much more interesting in good company.

Pro-tip: Don't read ChetanBhagat with friends if you want to stay friends.

Where: There are several public libraries in Dhaka, but my pick is actually a book shop, the largest in Bangladesh in fact. PathakShamabesh Centre is situated near Shahbagh Avenue. It is spacious, has a very nice collection of both Bangla and English books, and there are plenty of comfortable chairs and couches for the prospective reader to sit in and flip through books. The place is also well decorated and not too crowded, which makes for a good reading experience.

When: Open 10AM-9PM.

Cost: Depends on the book you purchase. Imported titles are comparatively more expensive.

Cons: The problem with visiting a good book store is that some book WILL catch your eye. Though this is the only activity on the list which is potentially free, it will probably end up taking the most out of your wallet.

Here's hoping that this article helped you prepare for the next day out. Wishing you a fun experience on the next hangout with friends!

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