

PENNY WISE**BY NASREEN SATTAR**Former CEO, Standard Chartered Bank,
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Financial Security: the Key to Peace of Mind

I am often asked by friends and relatives for financial advice prior to their retirement from their jobs. Most of them get impressive gratuity and a substantial amount of Provident Fund and other retiring benefits.

Some of the questions that I have been asked are:

What is the best way to invest where one can get a monthly or quarterly return to enjoy a good lifestyle?

What gives one the best tax rebate?

How can one maintain a decent standard of living without having to do another nine to five job?

I am outlining some of the best investment opportunities from my own experience:

A) Fixed Deposits in Commercial Banks or Non Banking Financial Institutions (NBFIs).

Shop around for good rates and also good reputable banks where the rate may be slightly lower, but you know your money is safe. At the moment, the commercial banks have put a ceiling on the highest rate a bank can pay, but this may change subject to the liquidity situation prevailing at a given time.

There are a few solid NBFIs offering better rates, as they do not have to conform to the rules of the commercial banks. Also they are slightly more flexible in the way they structure their Fixed Deposits. You can ask for a monthly or quarterly interest earned from the Fixed Deposits with tenures of one or more years. The interest you earn can be credited to your current or saving account. This way your principal amount remains intact and you spend only the earnings from it.

B) Investing in Government Savings Bond (Shanchaya Patras) also gives you a good

return. Just before submitting your tax return, there is always a rush to invest in Shanchaya Patras, which not only gives you a good return but also allows you a tax rebate. There is a limit to how much you can invest in these bonds, but make sure if you have the fund, utilise the full amount.

C) Some NBFIs have introduced low risk Share Market products, which are expected to get you better returns than saving instruments. This investment also qualifies for a tax rebate.

D) Remember a penny saved is a penny earned, so however good a lifestyle you may want to lead, wastages should be avoided. Try to get into the habit of budgeting your routine expenses so that one month's excess for whatever reason may be compensated with a little frugality in the next.

I have talked about several options, but one should always remember that all eggs should not be put in the same basket. In other words, find a happy balance of multiple savings instruments and institutions to give you the best mix of earnings and security.

A word of caution - always be wary of offers of very high returns.

Keep in mind how a well-respected financier, Bernie Madoff, cheated unsuspected investors of huge sums of money.

Madoff used a so-called Ponzi scheme, which lured investors in by guaranteeing unusually high returns. He convinced thousands of investors to hand over their savings, falsely promising consistent profits in return. He was caught in December 2008 and charged with fraud, money laundering, perjury, and theft.

NEWS FLASH

Smederevos Poet Autumn, International Poetry Festival in Serbia

The Smederevos Poet Autumn is an annual festival of Serbia, running in its 47th year that brings in poets from across the globe. The festival was held from 11-13th Oct, 2016 in Smederevo, through which the River Danube flows, linking this multicultural city which acts as a cross road between the Eastern and Western outposts of Europe.

This year, a Bangladeshi poet was featured for the first time at the Smederevos Poet Autumn. Poet, playwright, translator, essayist and social commentator, Anisur Rahman has been based in Sweden and is a member of the Swedish Writers' Union, the Playwrights Union in Sweden and Honourary Member of the Swedish PEN. Reading out his work in Bangla, Rahman's work was then translated on stage, into Serbian. Poets from other countries included UK, Spain, Bulgaria, Iran, Italy, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Turkey, Macedonia, Poland, Argentina, Greece and Bangladesh.

The poetry festival awards the Golden Key, the Little Golden Key and the Golden String. This year the Golden Key was awarded to British poet Sean O'Brien. The festival took off with a visit to the royal Palace of Milan Obrenovic, the Serbian king from the 19th century. The city also houses a fortress where the despot ruler Đurađ Branković (reigned from 1427-1456, CE) had installed special Venetian glass for his windows and an acoustic palace, to enjoy music

all the better. A wine tasting tour of the famed vineyards of the region was followed by a performance of traditional Serbian dances in traditional gear from the early 20th century. School children have always been a major part of the festival's outreach programs and poets were taken to schools to read out their books. As part of their vision to encourage readers, the festival organisers, Goran Djordjevic and his team including Aleksandra Djokovic, distributed about 10,000 books around local schools in the area.

Rahman presented two of his poems which he felt could speak to an international audience, as the poetry festival invites poets to speak in their own language while a Serbian translates it on stage.

STORY OF WATER AND STONE

I split the heart within my heart,
Build a house from stone.

I see my life inside –
A devastating storm within.

I see the sea in your eyes
Rising above water level.

Water embraces water
Where you see our house.

High tide strikes high tide,

The sun absorbs water,
Clouds suck clouds,

And life strains to breathe.



#BeautyAtEveryAge

HOW OLD ARE YOU BY DOVE

Azra Mahmood – Conversations on Confidence

Dove instigated a series of campaigns to fight against prejudices related to women and ageing. Based on its campaign programmes, it arranged a roundtable discussion – 'How Old Are You' at The Daily Star centre on the 18th of October, 2016. Eminent guests from all walks of life were present at the discussion to share their viewpoints regarding the prevailing stigma. Azra Mahmood was the moderator at the event. We sat down and asked about her understanding gleaned from the discussion. "The dialogue was very effective and I have learnt a lot from it. I have become more assured, since the day of the conference that 'prejudices against aging' is a serious issue that exists even today and needs to be addressed urgently in order to be eradicated." Being a professional model, always in the limelight of the fashion world, Azra accepted that such ludicrous discrimination existed vehemently in her world of profession. But she also assured us confidently, "I have never let my age bother me at all! I believe, with age, I have been able to gain more experience and that has helped me become a better human being".



Opinionated and mentally strong, Azra Mahmood had a few suggestions to provide. "I really thank Dove for its initiatives and campaigns; I think the brand is doing a commendable job reaching to young girls and instilling confidence in them. I believe these kinds of conversations and communication are extremely important and should begin at an early age, during the school years. That's when people get their identities developed." Azra Mahmood also informed us that, at the conference, she was particularly moved by the dialogues of young student panelists. "The future is definitely bright for all of us. Today's young girls are very self-assured and confident. The young panelists had so much to say. I can't imagine myself being so self-assured back in those days. But these girls know what they want and they are not at all affected by -societal standards of beauty. Young girls like them clearly show us that we are definitely on the right track."

By Mehrin Mubdi Chowdhury

Photo: Rashed Shumon

How Old are You?

