



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

The Guide to Public Washrooms

ZARIN RAYHANA

For me, surviving in a public washroom requires no less skill than surviving a week in the Amazon jungle. The amount of invisible microorganisms is always overwhelming, and God forbid, there is a huge possibility of encountering the obnoxious sight of an unflushed toilet. Should you fight or flee? The first knee-jerking response would be fleeing, but in case you have been gestating that meal for quite a long time now, may God have mercy upon your soul.

The first step to surviving in a jungle is to use nature's own resources, e.g. trees. Trees have a vital role in the manufacture of toilet paper. Don't enter a toilet

if you don't spot any tissue rolls. Flush and grab a huge wad of toilet paper to wipe off any unwanted debris that might be contaminating the façade of your porcelain throne. But what if there is a miniature Buriganga river within the toilet (or substances of unknown origin) and the flusher won't work? You must retreat from The Hall of Terror and, if luck is on your side, get the cleaner to do what he/she is supposed to do. If there are none, you have two options: 1) Run away choking and gagging. Hold the call of nature like you would hold the phone call of your frenemy, or 2) Keep your civilized notions at bay and let the primitiveness make you a cavalier. It won't feel natural despite being

natural. But you have to show it who's the boss.

If you've gotten over the first step, now it is time to create your haven in the forest. Use the trees again, with the aforementioned technique, to create your paper protection on the toilet seat. It would be great if you carry a disinfectant spray along with you. At this stage, you need to mute your system to stop any squeals of "eww" coming out of your mouth. It's now or never.

The third step is to use another huge clump of toilet tissue to remove the evidence of your haven and flush down the remnants. If the toilet doesn't flush, sadly you can do nothing other than accept your contribution to the mani-

festation. In case there is a queue outside your door, make sure to close the door as soon as you come out and run away from the crime scene without making any eye contact with the victims.

The fourth step would be to clean your hands with a hand sanitizer. Congratulations, you have finally survived the 30 minute struggle of using a public washroom. Now that you have seen the importance of trees for humanity, don't forget to plant some seeds after you reach home. And next time you step out, make sure you are fully equipped for the wilderness. Or at least be in a state that doesn't require braving the wilderness at all.

YOUR AVERAGE SWIM SQUAD

SAMIN SABAH ISLAM

The Michael Phelps wannabe

I'm here trying to subtly impress people by holding my breath underwater for 30 seconds and this person comes in with their impeccable shape and torso chiseled to perfection. They proceed to demonstrate six different swimming techniques at once, stealing my bling just like that. Even if you don't want to race, they're already one lane past you. They even resort to making you feel inferior by straining their fingers to touch the wall first. You'd want to drown them, but I'm pretty certain they'll retaliate by looking even cooler. Move over, swank, this place is for the amateurs.

The senior discussion club

No circle of trust is holier than the *bhabi* gossip circle in the middle of the pool where they'll be the most difficult to swim around. There's also a group of pensioners, who decided to start debating about all things politics that must not be interrupted. These senior citizen groups move at a 2 lap per hour rate, and grow at a degree of a new member every five minutes. And when they do decide to bless us with actual movement, they'll move at a glacial, sloth like pace. Oh, did you want to just float there like a lifeless corpse drifting off to sea? One word - bathtub.



The couple

Ah, nothing like romancing in the pool. The chloramine water, the serenity, the crowd of twenty other people of different ages gawking at them with impatience and distaste. She's a pretty girl and he's her man. Together they do a fine job of reminding you of your loneliness.

The overly friendly creep

One hour in the pool with them and you will be interrogated about your life, family background and your

deepest secrets. And once word has been shared, you two are now best friends, bonded by the chlorine infused water. There's no getting rid of this creep now. You never know if he's practicing holding his breath, or checking you out underwater with 3D goggles.

The trespasser

Bro, see those dividers on either side of you? Don't be waddling all over the place like it's your *boro dada's* property. Even if it is, have some respect for your fellow swimmers. Stay in your lane.

The accessory inventory

With their swim caps, goggles, kick board, flippers, ear plugs, water bottle, workout bag, arm floaties, stopwatch, hat, sunscreen, and flip-flops, these people need to calm down. I'm here in just my tights and goggles and I'm swimming just fine.

The human hurricane

Now these people are a force to be reckoned with. Exasperated breathing, legs kicking uncontrollably, arms splashing water in everyone else's faces. Five minutes later the supposed deep end of the pool reaches your waist and they just continue thrashing the water.

Samin Sabah Islam is on a quest to find the perfect diet while simultaneously drooling over pizza. Throw her some tips at sabhsamin11@gmail.com