

BUILDING BLOCKS OF TOMORROW

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

LIVING AND LIFESTYLE

3

KEEP ON LIVING

The Living section of Living and Lifestyle keeps an eye towards the future whilst exploring the many dimensions of our urban lives. From the rise of nuclear families, how to budget in these harsh financial times, the problems of being a single parent, brave men and women who raise their children on their own, the growing idea of fine-dining with your family and escaping to the garden on your rooftop; this section is a must read for all urban dwellers of the city!



THE NUCLEAR SOLUTION

Life in Urban Dhaka

MEHRIN MUBDI CHOWDHURY



Mood lights in the sitting room, electric piano in the foyer, a mini library packed rich with treasured books, playful cats moving about - the list could go on, illustrating the dreamy residence of Sharmin and Emran. They are an ideal couple to the typical city dweller. Duo living the 21st century lifestyle, comfortably in the metro city - Dhaka; but is it always easy for them as the pictures depict?

Living a nuclear lifestyle and working in senior management posts at renowned marketing agencies of the country, they are already the 'way forward' couple to many. How do they manage to share responsibilities or save enough money to indulge on 'luxuries'? Is there some secret to their way of living, that we are unaware of? We needed to find out and hence our rendezvous with one of the most coveted couples in town, Sharmin Rahman and Imtiaz Khan Emran.

"But, I don't feel any different" chuckles Sharmin, who works as a Group Creative Director at Asiatic Marketing Communications Limited. "There is nothing special about our lifestyle! This is how most working couples live today, even in our country. There will be a rise in nuclear families in the near future, and for more reasons than one - couples need to stay closer to their workplaces and the schools of their children to minimise commuting times and expenses plus individualistic living makes it difficult for many of us to deal with extended family complexities.

"Personally, I think there's nothing wrong with choosing to live in a nuclear family, it is just the new way of living!" she further added.

Similar to Sharmin and Emran, there are many couples earning steadfastly, but failing equally as well at any form of long term savings. Imtiaz Khan

Emran - Group Account Director, Bitopi Leo Burnett, confessed he knew a bit about the art of juggling with the expenses and coming out as the winner.

"It is true for every city dweller. No matter how adequately you earn, you will always feel the need to earn more! Every 'supply' gives birth to new 'demands'. We live in a consumer oriented society; disposable income has increased sufficiently - we want to buy better, eat better, consume better, live better; hence, our expenses are ever rising.

"A word of advice would be, families need to plan and budget according to their incomes. If you plan right, you can still have your dream trip fulfilling all your needs and obligations," said Emran.

Talking more about the social aspects of years that are ahead, the couple pointed out a major change in the development sector - an influx of women workers at the workplace.

Sharmin and Emran both expect the trend to graphically rise over the years. Sharmin elaborated further. "A woman always needs to create her own identity and that would never be possible if one has to continuously ask for pocket money, even for the tiniest expenses like beauty parlour bills!"

Discussing more on the common social trends of the future Emran alleges, "The near future sees us being more dependant on technology, but there can be no scepticism attached to the rise. It makes our lives easier, a little better than before."

As we discussed further, the couple agreed there were many progressive expectations like the rise in technology self-reliance, influx of women at the workplace but in hindsight, there were also the rise in personal financial crisis and the increasing amount of debt reliance, ultimately pushing individuals into an eternal abyss.

Emran had a take on this note. "Ev-

ery coin has its flip side. We practically live on our credit cards, both home and abroad, for the sheer convenience they provide. But one needs to be very meticulous in paying the bills on date. There's no point if you eventually pay more or spend more. It is all about discipline, self-control and prior planning."

We interviewed a few other urban settlers, to find out their expectations regarding life in the years that are to follow.

I think more than the money, I am worried about the decrease in human values.

And the way we have been

spoon feeding most our children, this

will ultimately lead to a generation of

youngsters who cannot even tie their

own shoelaces. Everything looks mostly

grim from my point of view - to keep

up with the lifestyle of 'having it all' a

lot of stress will be created - that will

ultimately lead to the rise of frustra-

tions, depressive illnesses and maybe

even substance abuse. Most elderly

people will be living in old age homes,

rather than with their own families.

People will become super materialistic

prioritising 'things' much more over

family.

RUMAYLA ISLAM,

FACULTY, SIR JOHN WILSON

SCHOOL

The new payscale in 2015 has seen a significant rise in the government sector salaries but the same effect has not been prevalent in the private sector. In hindsight, the deposit saving rate in the private banks have reduced significantly - in most cases, we are actually losing money with our savings. The cost of staple items to luxury items, everything, is facing the fangs of inflation. Gas costs and electricity costs are rising every single year, but the salary is not being adjusted accordingly. If this trend goes into the future, then it will be extremely hard to survive on a single earning.

NAVILA AMEEN,
GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE

We already live in a joint family because it is too difficult to 'go nuclear' in this day and age. And the situation will not change in the near future. With the rising costs, the uncertainty of private sector jobs, logistics - all coming into action together, things only look terrifying. Despite both of us working, with two little kids we cannot even imagine branching off, at least not in a few years time. Cons aside, the pros of living in a joint family are a lot more. At least for us!"

"A word of advice would be, families need to plan and budget according to their incomes. If you plan right, you can still have your dream trip fulfilling all your needs and obligations," said Emran.

MINU AHMED,
COLUMNIST, DHAKA TRIBUNE

I am already living a futuristic lifestyle, as some would say. My wife works out of town and I work within the city. It is only in the weekends that we get to be together. Rest of the five working days we live separately, closer to each of our individual workplaces. We both try to live within the limit of our salaries, never relying too much on credit cards

or any sort of debt. It is difficult to make predictions for the future, but I expect little difference - if it is just the two of us. However, if we plan on having children, then it would surely become extremely tight for us - maybe at that time we would consider taking second jobs.

SHAHRIYAR,
PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER

While we cannot really predict what the future holds for us, we can definitely look at how far we have progressed in terms of technology, development and lifestyle. As time moves on our present



will soon be memorialised in nostalgia. Here is to hoping for a brighter future in all aspects of our lives.

Mehrin Mubdi Chowdhury works as a Feature Writer at The Daily Star. She can be contacted at chowdhury.mehrin1@gmail.com

Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed
Model: Sharmin Rahman, Imtiaz Khan Emran