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RUPCHANDA-THE DAILY STAR SUPER CHEF A NEW REALM OF REALITY TV

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Reality TV has long been a fixture of regular television. Shows like *Queen for a Day* and *Cash and Carry* introduced the concept in the 1940s, testing the waters. While they were both equally popular, their unscripted scenarios did not capture the imagination as much as such things do today. The 60s and 70s carried on the legacy giving birth to the forerunners of the current reality TV era -- *The Family*, *Chuck Barry: The Dating Game* and *The Gong Show*. What made these shows so popular was the willingness of the participants to sacrifice their dignity and their privacy all for the sake of TV Ratings. Reality TV solidified its place as a top genre in the late 90s and early 2000s with the successes of shows such as *Big Brother* and *Survivor*. Again, these shows also focused on politicking, overexposed drama and attempted to often showcase their characters as unique, resulting in more scripted unscripted sequences than sticking to actual reality. Despite the popularity of reality shows worldwide, in Bangladesh, there wasn't much experimentation with reality TV, until, in 2013, a show changed the scenario altogether. Enter *Rupchanda-The Daily Star Super Chef*.

It all began in a small studio in the current *The Daily Star* premises. The first edition of the programme was titled *Rupchanda-Star Lifestyle Amateur Chef*. The show invited amateur chefs to come together and compete in a cooking show. The response was tremendous, as it was the first show of its kind and the first such platform for aspiring cooks in Bangladesh. The show, though initially

small, passed the litmus test of television programming and came back bigger and better next season. "The amateur chef competition surprised us but also taught us a valuable lesson. The infectious enthusiasm and response showed us there was a real desire for such a platform," Faisal Mahmud, Marketing Manager, Bangladesh Edible Oil Limited, states. "Since we were so involved in the food scene, we wanted to provide the perfect platform for aspiring chefs and hence *Rupchanda-The Daily Star Super Chef* was born," he added. Since its first season, the show has redefined what it means to be a chef in Bangladesh, a profession that struggled to cement its place as a legitimate career.

The creators and crew of the show put a lot of effort to ensure that what's captured on screen is real, and not scripted. As Wahidul Islam Shuvrow, a Director of NTV, explains, more cameras have been added to capture each moment of the show. The participants are never handed talking points and there is no blooper reel to speak of.

The judges of the show are also involved at all stages of production, ensuring their expertise does not go to waste. The participants are encouraged to use the platform to tell their own stories, making them more relatable to the audience. After their participation in the competition, many have gone on to become full-fledged restaurateurs or getting a job at a top restaurant. Some have even gone on to star in their own cooking show.

Over four seasons, the show has garnered a lot of positive reviews. Over 10,000 people from all over the



country have participated with over 200 chefs now be involved with the Super Chef and Rupchanda brand.

"Every year the show brings something new. This year, we are tremendously happy with the response. Interestingly, this year we got a lot of variety, a lot of great cooks. Each year, the variety seems to be on the ascendancy," Faisal Mahmud said. "In the future, we want to take this competition to a place where the platform gains even further legitimacy."

Indeed, *Rupchanda-The Daily Star Super Chef* is considered one of the most well-known reality TV shows in the country. A lot of it is due to the dedication of the members behind the scenes, always ensuring that the reality-based nature is never compromised. *Rupchanda-The Daily Star Super Chef* is changing the culinary scene as we speak. And it will continue to do wonders for the profession and those enchanted with the art of cooking. ■



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We, travellers, have fallen in love with Sajek's stark, burnt-umber coloured cliffs that jut upright throughout the valley. The sweeping views of the picturesque green villages have become one of our favourite getaways.

But we are shortsighted. So much so that we are awestruck by the sight of Sajek's massive expanse of mountains and valleys, yet we ignore the thousands of people from around 22-23 villages who are starving, and on the verge of death, as they did not have a significant harvest this year.

They are fighting the pangs of hunger by eating roots, wild potatoes and the cores of banana trees. There has been little to no progress in ensuring relief for this starving population.

If you want to donate, contact Rebang Dewan, Dhaka University Jukka Students' Family (bKash +8801856601897).

PHOTOS: PAHN CHAKMA

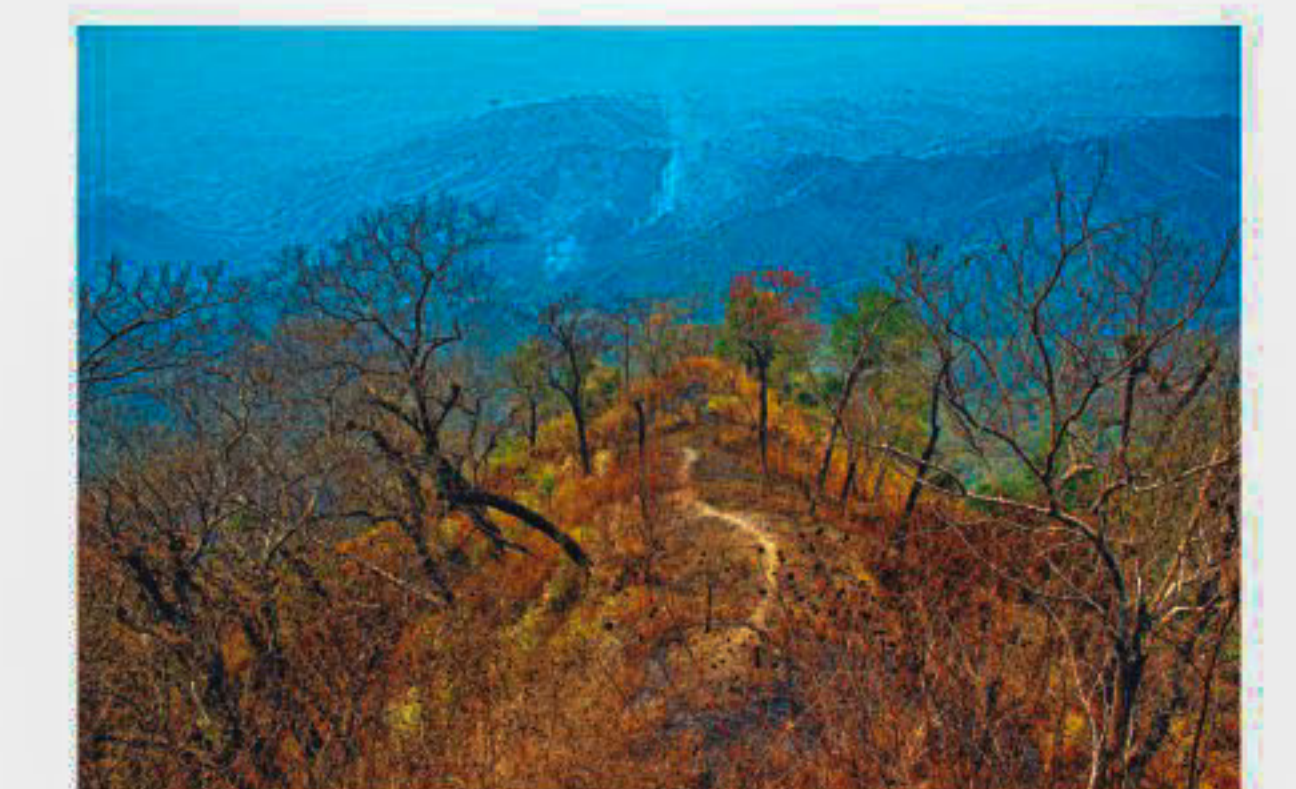


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