

Star
LIFE
Style

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tion of The Daily Star



#Each for
equal

FOR AN ENABLED WORLD
ENSURING EQUALITY P6
THE ECONOMICS OF GENDER QUALITY
BEING FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT P7
OF EQUALITY AND DIGNITY
BREAKING THE CHAINS OF PATRIARCHY C

PHOTO: SAZZAD IBNE SAYED
MODEL: JUI, NIKI, MOHINI, NAAZ
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CHECK IT OUT

Celebrating Women's Day with Kay Kraft

Go purple with Kay Kraft this Women's Day as the fashion brand celebrates the creativity, inspiration, trust, pride, and strength of women. Kay Kraft is offering shalwar-kameez, sari, kurta etc. to celebrate



the day with style. All of Kay Kraft's outlets are ready with the collection, you can also buy them online at www.kaykraft.com

For more information, visit <https://www.facebook.com/kaykraft.com.bd/>

Women's Day discounts from Rang Bangladesh

This Women's Day, get up to 10 percent discounts on online shopping from Rang Bangladesh. This offer can be availed on any product bought from the Rang Bangladesh website or their Facebook page till 8 March, 2020.

To shop online, visit www.rang-bd.com and for offline shoppers, all the outlets are ready with special lines of clothes and accessories.

For more information, call 01777744344 or visit www.facebook.com/rangbangladesh

NEWS FLASH

Canvas for awareness and change

Wall art is not merely just a tool for decoration, but can also be an effective medium to convey messages and raise awareness on social issues. Keeping this in mind, Berger Paints Limited Bangladesh has taken a unique initiative to raise awareness regarding urban tree plantation, familial and social norms, and a beautiful childhood. Their campaign was titled 'Wrong Bodle Rongin Kori,' meaning creating a colourful world by changing the wrongs, both socially and intellectually.

A different take on outdoor advertising, the campaign was carried from September, 2019 to January, 2020, by painting awareness messages on the walls of Rampura, Nadda, Shahjadpur, Banani



Chairmanbari, Kemal Ataturk Avenue and Mirpur in Dhaka. Earlier, Berger had held similar campaigns in the city of Khulna and Chattogram as well.

For more information, visit <https://www.facebook.com/bergerbd/>

Women's Day offers and talent recruitment at Amari Dhaka

On the coming 8 March, 2020 Amari Dhaka will be providing various discounts on packages plus an opportunity for passionate individuals to explore a range of employment opportunities.

Amaya Food Gallery will offer a 25 percent discount for female diners with Tk 1,000 worth spa treatment voucher from Breeze Spa, Amari Dhaka. Guests can avail the vouchers upon certain treatment packages. Also, Amari's signature Breeze Spa will be offering 30 percent discount on body treatments for female guests on 8 March only.

For talented women looking to improve their careers, there will be a unique opportunity to explore a career with ONYX. The Amari brand, which is the centrepiece of the ONYX portfolio of hospitality brands, is providing this chance to discover career growth opportunities, and to meet with human resources representatives to discuss career options. There will be recruitment for different departments from 10AM to 4PM at Amari Dhaka on 8 March, 2020.

Candidates can apply for their preferred positions; shortlisted candidates will be called for further interview. Interested candidates should bring their resumé and a recent passport size photo for this purpose.

For more information, call 01777796444 or visit www.facebook.com/AmariDhaka

Salmon fest at Dhaka Regency

Taking advantage of the current fine weather that's well suited for open-air dining, Dhaka Regency Hotel and Resort is holding their annual salmon festival.

Fresh salmon is being served at the hotel's rooftop garden restaurant with a live fry and grill station.

Following a made-to-order interactive format of dining, guests will be able to choose their desired cut of salmon from a selection of bone-in and skinless, bone-in with skin, boneless and skinless, and boneless with skin options. The outlet's gourmet experts will then prepare the fish to the guest's preferred level of frying or grill and serve it with up to two condiments from a choice of lemon garlic butter, dill mustard, caper and cream, and spicy tangy Cajun sauce. The meal offer also comes with one complimentary mini-buffet dinner with every salmon dish purchased. Guests may enjoy this sumptuous offer at a promotional price of



Tk 2,390 net per salmon meal.

This festival will be running till Saturday, 7 March, every evening from 6PM to 10:30PM.

For bookings, please call +8801713332661.

For more information, please visit www.facebook.com/dhakaregencyhotel

us on [f /Sandalina](https://www.facebook.com/Sandalina)

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স্যান্ডালিনা

সোপ

রূপচর্চায় আভিজাত্য...

NEWS FLASH

Cookups: A story of homecooking

Casting a spin on home-dining to revolutionise it, Cookups is an online, homemade food delivery system that seeks to introduce thoughtful dining onto our platters. An initiative of Misha Ali and Namira Hossain, Cookups aims to shine light on home cooks with exceptional recipes, fit for any fine-dining restaurant, but in reality, are only passed down in the confines of personal kitchens and family tables.

Cookups serves comfort foods like alu chaat with chutney, mutton haleem and ilish polao, hot to your plates. Traditional cravings of coconut sambol, lemongrass chicken, and pata rice can be satiated and coupled with gulps of kalojams as the perfect dessert. Even catering to a small brunch or party of 20-40 can be handed over to Cookups to achieve happy guests sure to rave about the food!

Although the app boasts about 1500 certified and registered cooks, once downloaded, Cookups will serve about 200 online cooks ready to cater to your food needs, with recipes that are sure to remind you either of your grandmother's kitchen or an exotic, foreign restaurant.

Speaking of food needs, Cookups is not to be confused with the host of food delivery apps sweeping across Dhaka. Here, the primary difference is the simple fact that Cookups brings you authentic homemade food with freshly-sourced ingredients straight from the kitchens of its registered cooks.

Seeking mere house cooks worthy of chef's hats, Cookups is open to anyone with a true passion for cooking. For you to show your salt's worth on the other side of the stove as a certified Cookups cook, all you need to remember is quality being above everything else.

"We have a really low acceptance rate when it comes to taking on home



cooks because they need to meet certain standards in order to be involved with us. They need to pass kitchen inspection tests where we check hygienic conditions of the kitchen and inquire if they have proper trash disposal, amongst other things. After that, we also have taste tests where the cook is given approval on a particular dish they have prepared. Only after the approval can the option of that meal be put up on the app for our diners to order. We also ensure

that real pictures of the food as prepared by our home cooks are used instead of ones taken from glossy food magazines," elaborates Nahita Nishmin, COO of Cookups.



Once you have been given the green light, using your own kitchen to champion your skills as a chef and feeding hundreds if not thousands of diners all over the city is just a stove away. And this culinary independence is exactly what has given many cooks at Cookups a sense of empowerment.

"Being a mother of six and a practitioner of purdah that restricts me from a public life, food has always been a passion. I want the food I prepare to speak for itself and channel my talent in a useful way," says Rezwana Kabir. Being associated with Cookups has introduced Kabir to financial independence through homemade chocolates and shahi pakki biryanis.

Alpana Habib, author of an award-winning cookbook shares her take on being at Cookups, saying, "Women who cook for their families every day without much appreciation now deserve a platform where people of all walks of life can enjoy their food. And this is exactly what Cookups gives them."

Cookups is the definition of culinary empowerment through kitchens. Whether you are a mother of two desiring recognition for your cookery or a stay-at-home dad taking equal control of the kitchen, your passion for cooking could be the answer to hungry diners looking for a taste of home on their platters. And, if you are one of those diners, a plethora of mouth-watering goodness now lies at your fingertips with Cookups!

By Ramisa Haque
Photo courtesy: Cookups

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/cookupsbd/>

Website: <https://cookups.com.bd/>

Call to order: +8801887454024

Shoot to thrill

My first Bond movie was Thunderball at Madhumita Cinema Hall sometime in the late seventies. For lack of a baby sitter I tagged along on my parents' movie date, thereby spoiling Sean Connery's awesome action moments as James Bond for them.

I have no clue whether I understood anything of Bond at all back then, but I do remember being forcibly side-tracked with crisp packets every time glamorous Bond girls in skimpy clothes appeared on-screen. And there was a lot of crisp packets I tell you. I think this incident during that eventful movie is what kicked off my undying love for 'deshi' potato chips along with all the Bond girls.

Recently, I was watching YouTube and looking for something interesting when I stumbled upon the trailer of James Bond's 2020 outing with 'No Time to Die.' And suddenly, I started reminiscing Bond girls.

Most might disagree, but I believe all the Bond girls are each an action hero or anti-hero themselves, and not just some eye-candy put in to please Bond and moviegoers alike. They all have pivotal roles such as key love interests, sidekicks, allies or enemies of Agent 007.

As for the new entries in the Bond franchise, I find that the Bond girls feature more intricate character depth and arc than Bond himself. Each woman has an important role to play in the story, and get more into the integral parts of the fine fabrication of plots, just as much as Bond is.

While the status of M as a Bond girl is debatable, I think M, especially considering her role in Skyfall, is definitely a Bond woman. There is no mandate on what kind of person a Bond girl should be or what role she must play, but all of Ian Fleming's Bond novels and short stories include one or more female characters who can be said to qualify as Bond girls.

Each character in the novels, and later movie adaptations, brings in her own unique charismatic individual traits, but mostly, a Bond girl shares a few common characteristics.

For one, they tick just about every categorical box of beauty there is and coupled with those looks are smarts and combat potential that can go toe to toe with the man with the licence to kill. They exist to either help Bond in his fight for good, or to put 007 out of business.

They dress in practical yet assertive fashion, wear little jewellery, wide leather belts, and shoes fit for any situation. Sporting a tan look, their hair falls heavily to their shoulders in a casual cut of any colour from fiery red to a classy brunette, or a pale blonde. They appear in classic bouffant shoulder length hairdos or sleek gelled side parts, or soft Brigitte Bardot haircut.

I strongly believe that without these talented, athletic, intelligent, beautiful, and charming Bond girls, Bond would not be able to save

the world as often as he did, or look as suave and debonair as he does.

I found two reasons to talk about them this March. One is obvious because it's a new Bond movie year, hitting the screens in late March. As for the second reason, for me personally, I feel femininity, sophistication and boldness are what Bond girls exhibit. I find them beauties with brains and power.

I want all of us women and girls to be bold and beautiful, both inside and out. It doesn't matter if you are homemaker or a CEO or a day labourer, bring out that

inner strength for all the world to see. Challenge yourself to reach your goals, to fight for what is yours, and to show the society that you are not naïve and weak.

Don't forget to read our article focusing on the economic importance of recognising women's work at home, and on mompreneurs and their businesses, and more.

This 8th March, appreciate the women in your lives by recognising their talents and strengths, instead of greeting them with a dry, droopy, dead rose.
Happy International Women's Day

— RBR
Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed
Model: Mohini, Niki
Styling: Sonia Yeasmin Isha
Makeup: Farzana Shakil's Makeover Salon



◆ HOROSCOPE ◆



ARIES (MAR. 21-APR. 20)

You have a lot to offer. Sudden changes are likely. Social activities will be satisfying. Channel your inner Gloria Steinem as you charge forward this Tuesday.



TAURUS (APR. 21-MAY 21)

Stay out of unnecessary trouble. Avoid minor accidents by maintaining concentration. Don't let others daunt your progress. Channel your inner Cecilia Payne and be one with the stars this Thursday.



GEMINI (MAY 22-JUN. 21)

Put genuine effort into your projects. You don't owe anyone an explanation. Social activities will be enjoyable. Channel your inner Marilyn Monroe and win hearts this Tuesday.



CANCER (JUN. 22-JUL. 22)

Your unique approach will intrigue others. Don't overexert yourself. Don't waste time trying to please everyone. Channel your inner Frida Kahlo and the world will become your canvas this Thursday.



LEO (JUL. 23-AUG. 23)

New romantic partners can arise through group projects. Your suggestions at work will be appreciated. You will do your best work by yourself. Channel your inner Amelia Earhart and reach for the skies this Saturday.



VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 23)

Don't get into unnecessary arguments. Keep your personal information to yourself. Go on short trips to recharge your spirit. Channel your inner Mother Teresa and take the world in your arms this Wednesday.



LIBRA (SEP. 24-OCT. 23)

Do things that you enjoy. Open up and let your thoughts be known. Concentrate at your work. Channel your inner Lata Mangeshkar and let the world hear you this Sunday.



SCORPIO (OCT. 24-NOV. 21)

Time to make changes at home. Romance may be likely if you travel. Any plans for entertainment will be good. Channel your inner Marie Curie and discover something new this Thursday.



SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

Use your abundant energy for something good. Enjoy all the good things life has to offer. Social events will lead to a strong and stable relationship. Channel your inner Jane Austen and inscribe your destiny this Saturday.



CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 20)

Think carefully before making any move. Don't try to be bossy. You could experience some unusual circumstances. Channel your inner Michelle Obama and lead the pack this Friday.



AQUARIUS (JAN. 21-FEB. 19)

Direct your energy wisely. Make plans with your partner. Don't push your opinions on others. Channel your inner Madhubala and etch your name onto the heavens this Friday.



PISCES (FEB. 20-MAR. 20)

Look for creative ways to make extra money. Don't overspend to impress others. Don't turn down plans to mingle with children. Channel your inner Elizabeth Taylor and take centre stage this Saturday.



No longer is dull, colourless and boring acceptable!

TAAGA MAN is a one-stop fashion solution for the young gentlemen of today. It features casual to formal attires for the guys along with debonair shoes, man-bags, wallets and other accessories.

If you are worried that your personality might not be able to take such a big leap at such short notice, we advise you to take it a bit slowly, and for that TAAGA MAN has all kinds of solutions, from the sophisticated beige panjabi to the mustard kurta that looks classy on all occasions.

So, for any sort of fashion predicament, one needs to just visit the TAAGA MAN stores available in Aarong outlets in Dhaka, Chattogram, Khulna, Sylhet and Mymensingh or specifically visit the dedicated TAAGA store in Satmasjid Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka. To know

...And TAAGA MAN certainly helps in this regards with their latest collection of up-to-the minute trendy clothes for the modern chap.

Every year there is a specific fashion trend that is highly pursued by fashion folks all over the world

CHECK IT OUT

TAAGA MAN

Casual. Suave. Retro. These are styling ideas for the 21st century men. Today's men know how to groom themselves. They know which styles suit them best and they are adamant on following the latest trends.



and just like that in 2020, it's florals for men, basically spelling out R-E-T-R-O in bold.

Remember the '90s when celebrities were sporting the geometric shapes in large prints?

Well, if you fail at recollecting, you are probably Gen Z and need to overdose on old shows.

The gist of the story is, those ultra-fashionable days of disco and Aloha attires are back again!

In the yesteryears, they used to wear it with titanium bracelets or the stainless steel necklace. Today, the pairings are more with trendy digital watches and sneakers, both available in an array of colours.

more visit: www.aarong.com/taagaman

— **LS Desk**
Wardrobe and Photo: TAAGA MAN





INTERVIEW

An equal world is an enabled world

Feminism is a complex subject. It deals with many issues, from equal rights to personal rights. If you ask me however, feminism is more about the struggle to achieve justice in all circumstances; not only a fight against patriarchy, but also about class distinctions and how we treat others based on that perception. A feminist discusses the needs of people from all ranks and class; otherwise it becomes a resemblance of the white feminist handle. And that's not feminism.

Last year, I met Hameeda Hossain for the first time at a private party hosted for notable Dhakaiites. Of course, I went there as just a reporter to cover the scoop, rather than as one of them, but it was remarkable enough to be able to stand next to these extraordinary personalities. This year, when the interview of the famed human rights activist, founder of Ain o Salish Kendra, and a renowned academic was up for grabs, I did not hesitate for a moment before seizing the opportunity. And luckily, our meeting was scheduled at her residence.

Her home is nearly invisible from the street. To get to it, you have to go through a gateway, and then navigate a mini garden and several houses before someone actually points out to the actual residence. The one-storied building is somewhat classical, a true resemblance to the golden days: gigantic rooms, large paintings, shelves packed with books, and a study.

When I arrived, Hossain said, "I hope you didn't have a hard time finding the house!"

Face to face, Hossain has the same intensity and forthrightness, as expected from a human rights activist. We discussed many things, talked about the challenges of feminism; she shared her views on the discriminatory existence of class distinction, social injustice and much more.

LS: How do you feel about feminism? What does it mean to you?

HH: Feminism is a complex subject. It deals with many issues, from equal rights to personal rights. If you ask me however, feminism is more about the struggle to achieve justice in all circumstances; not only a fight against patriarchy, but also about class distinctions and how we treat others based on that perception.

A feminist discusses the needs of people from all ranks and class; otherwise it becomes a resemblance of the white feminist handle. And that's not feminism.

LS: During times when we can proudly say that we have achieved a lot in terms of feminist goals and rights of the women. There are people still looking down upon the expression and misogyny prevails. What do you have to say about this?

HH: Men criticising the feminist platform or anybody else don't actually understand what the struggle is all about! They think a feminist only craves for financial equality



– like 'if they earn Tk 10 then we have to earn the same' – something like that.

But that is so wrong. What a true feminist really wants is increased prevalence of justice, more tolerance to each other's differences, recognition of and paying respect to different ethnicities, paying heed to all social structures and valuing their rights etc.

LS: Let us go back to our point again. Why are so many domestic violence cases and rapes taking place every day when we have come so far in terms of establishing the priorities of feminism?

HH: I would not say that discrimination has increased over the years. It's just that women were too afraid to report assault in the past — today they are no longer worried and instead, choose to report cases immediately.

Today, they are not worried about intimidation, as they were in the past. And maybe that's why the reports have increased.

LS: Why is there such prevalent misogyny?

HH: There is an unhealthy level of competition between the genders. Men think that women are getting more preference at jobs, whilst they are being deprived of these opportunities. But what they do not realise is that these very women — also have a double role to play. They work in the morning as labourers and later, when they come back home, they need to cook food for the family and carry out other household chores without any support, since the concept of sharing housework has not yet been established.

It is for us to challenge this mindset! We must tell them (the men) to learn to look after their own selves as matured adults.

LS: Any other discrepancies from the aspect of feminism?

HH: Oh! So many actually. Where do I even start? Let's begin with the state; the largest representation of women at the government level is the mohila parishad. There, we see women taking seats based on quotas and following the dictates of the government which is largely male dominated, even when headed by a female lead. For a true representation of women and society at large, there should be more women in the cabinet.

The System of National Accounts or SNA considers only those works or services which are bought and sold in exchange of money. Women's household activities such as cooking, cleaning, care for children and the old, and teaching children are not accounted for in the traditional estimation of GDP, which is based on SNA. As a result, women's time spent for all sorts of essential tasks at home remain unrecognised.



INTERVIEW

A financially independent woman is a free woman



Taslima Begum, a freelance beautician, earns quite a comfortable living, allowing her to maintain a family, pay rent and her children's tuition fees all on her own. But this was not the case even a few years ago, when she was living with her abusive husband.

He would not let Begum out of his sight even for a moment and despised the idea of her working outside. She would face humiliation on a daily basis, sometimes even physically portraying the brunt of the abusive relationship.

All these had a tremendous effect on the children, to the point that they began to suffer from depression and performed poorly at school. Today, a year after the divorce, she only wonders why she had not separated long ago; she also wonders whether all this downgraded behaviour was due to the fact that she was the weaker sex and was a dependent — not being able to earn her own living.

Certainly, things are very different today — Begum is financially independent and she worries about all the women in the world, who are not financially independent because to Begum, there's no vice worse than financial dependency.

As a voice to all these women and an assurance to a future of respect and civility, we spoke to **Fahmida Khatun, executive director, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)**, who gave us an insightful peek into the economics of gender equality, SNA, Pink Tax and financial freedom.

LS: Equality is not a women's issue, it's a business issue. Gender equality is essential for economies and communities to thrive. What is your viewpoint regarding this?

FK: This is quite simple and straight forward. Women represent half of the population. But at present, women's participation in the labour force is only 36 percent, according to the Labour Force Survey 2016-17 of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

If a substantial amount of workforce is outside the labour market, it is natural that we are being deprived of the potential contribution of women to the economy.

In 2015, a report by McKinsey Global Institute found that in a "full potential" scenario where women play an identical role in labour markets as men, global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will increase by

USD 28 trillion by 2025, which is 26 percent.

This implies we are losing out on a substantial amount of our GDP by not integrating women in the labour force. This is true for Bangladesh too. In 2017, a World Bank study estimated that by increasing women labour force participation to 45 percent by 2020 will help Bangladesh increase its GDP by one percentage point.

LS: The economic value of the homemaker has not yet been included in the SNA (System of National Accounts), and their valuable contributions are still overlooked. Do you think giving them recognition, and prizing the intrinsic value of unpaid labour will help in the process of achieving 'real' equality?

FK: A large part of economic activities undertaken by women in Bangladesh, including household chores, care and agriculture work, remain unaccounted for since conventional measures such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) primarily considers goods and services produced for markets. This transmits the wrong signals to policymakers, whose allocative and distributional decisions are then influenced by this. Family members' attitudes towards a woman who does not have an income are often discriminatory. This outlook also occasionally leads to violence.

The System of National Accounts or SNA considers only those works or services which are bought and sold in exchange of money. Women's household activities such as cooking, cleaning, care for children and the old, and teaching children are not accounted for in the traditional estimation of GDP, which is based on SNA. As a result, women's time spent for all sorts of essential tasks at home remain unrecognised.

Since they do not generate any monetary value, their contribution to both the family and the economy is totally overlooked.

On the other hand, if someone was engaged to do these jobs in exchange of a

salary, it will go to the GDP.

But this is not about paying women a salary for their household activities. It is about recognising their contribution, both at home and at the national level.

Many women are undervalued in the family, as they do not have an income. But the fact that even if these women wanted to take part in the job market, all of them could probably not be able to do so as there is no one in their families to look after small children or senior citizens. We take these chores at home for granted and tend to forget that without women doing these, husbands would not be able to work at offices smoothly, children will remain unattended, and overall, the wheels of the household will cease to move.

So, what is required, is first, the recognition of women's unaccounted household work. Secondly, those who have qualification and have a desire to engage in income earning activities, should be supported by their families. Thirdly, policymakers have to make an enabling environment so that these women can work outside home. Facilities such as safe day-care centres for small children, adequate transportation exclusively for women, secure female hostels for women from outside cities, and overall improvement of safety for women should be established.

LS: As currently measured, GDP does not take homemakers and their contributions into account, but it probably should. More recently, The Economist called for a "new metric" of economic progress that included "unpaid work at home, such as childcare, cooking, and caring for relatives." What is your opinion on this matter?

FK: We have been demanding for establishing a satellite account where women's unpaid work will be reflected. This account is not a part of the main framework of the GDP, but will be presented in parallel

with SNA to reflect women's unpaid activities.

This is to indicate the amount and value of women's unpaid work. Besides, BBS should also regularly undertake time-use survey to record all types of activities women perform at home from morning till evening, and then value that according to the market price.

The reason for such demand is that there is adequate evidence on the amount of time spent by women in unpaid work at home. CPD had conducted time-use survey among 8,320 women and 5,334 men in 5,670 households across 64 districts of Bangladesh who are aged 15 years and above. We have found that the value of women's unpaid household work was equivalent to 76.8 percent of Bangladesh's GDP in FY2013-14 based on the replacement cost method, and 87.2 percent of GDP based on the willingness to accept method. Besides, it was also found by the study that on an average, a female member of a household undertakes 12.1 non-SNA activities on a typical day, while the corresponding figure for a male counterpart is only 2.7. Our survey also found that time spent by a female household person (aged 15 years and above) on 'non-SNA' works (7.7 hours) is about three times higher compared to a corresponding male person (2.5 hours). Regrettably, in Bangladesh, unpaid work has never been considered as part of national accounts estimates. This has primarily neglected the contribution of the women in economy and society.

These findings clearly reiterate the need for a "new metric" in our economic progress. Hence, one of our recommendations for policymakers is to conduct comprehensive Time-Use Survey by the BBS as part of Labour Force Survey on a regular basis. This is to present the time-use pattern of both women and men across various activities.

The government needs to show political will and should undertake necessary policy steps towards reforming the estimation practice of SNA in order to reflect women's unaccounted activities in the estimated GDP. To this end, the government may consider forming a technical committee consisting of statisticians, economists, gender specialists, advocacy groups and relevant



Equality through DIGNITY



The Manusher Jonno Foundation, a non-governmental and non-profit organisation, has been running a nationwide campaign, Equality through Dignity, since 2012, to raise the status of women and reduce discrimination and violence against them. The campaign aims to change the existing and generalised negative perception of women by highlighting their contribution to the family, community, and state. Based on this understanding, on Thursday, 19 February, 2020, the Finance Minister, AHM Mustafa Kamal, affirmed in a dialogue, 'Formal Recognition of Women's Unaccounted Contribution,' and that he will make a reference in his budget speech about women's unaccounted work and the importance of recognising it. He also said we should put our heads together to find out how this can be done.

And hence, based on this positive note, and in anticipation of the upcoming International Women's Day, we spoke to **Shaheen Anam, executive director, Manusher Jonno Foundation** to learn more about equality, reduction of domestic violence, inclusion of unpaid labour into the GDP, feminism and its future prospects.

LS: Equality with Dignity — Will you please brief us on the campaign and its capacity?

SA: Equality with dignity, a National campaign, was launched as a response to the rising violence against women and girls in Bangladesh. We believe that violence happens because women in our society have lower status compared to the men and position in the family and society can be improved via recognition of their contributions in all dimensions, from housework (less visible) to formal labour (more visible). Our conviction is that recognition of economic contributions has direct connection to the reduction of domestic violence and the status upgrade of women at large.

LS: Most homemakers perceive 'housework' as no work at all. Do you think this is detrimental for their mental well-being?

SA: You are quite right on this note. Most homemakers stay depressed because, according to their perception, housework is an insignificant job — it adds no value. The situation is made worse by the added sentiments of the patriarchal society, which is unbecoming — compelling women to be the primary caregivers, carrying out domestic work all by themselves, just because it is customary.

We, on the other hand, want to prove that housework is indeed very important and that no work in the world can be properly executed without taking care of the home first. We need these facts to be acknowledged. We hope to change the archaic mind-set and encourage people to value women's work, no matter if they work at home or outside.

LS: The Manusher Jonno Foundation has been promoting the Satellite Accounting System to be able to quantify unpaid labour. Can you please elaborate on the system and reflect on its outcome?

SA: Household Satellite Accounts, measures the unpaid work in the domestic scenario, such as caregiving to the young and the elderly, domestic work such as cooking, washing the dishes, cleaning the house, caring for poultry, livestock, etc., which are unaccounted for in the standardised System of National Accounts (SNA). The results of the Satellite Accounting System allow us to highlight the estimation of women's contribution in GDP — through a systematic calculation that places economic value to unpaid work done by homemakers.

This is a proposal and mostly resembles a shadow accounting system, or simply said, an alternative reporting method. The Satellite Accounting System has already earned state level recognition in few other countries like Mexico, Kenya, certain states in India, Nepal, etc.

Regarding the outcome, there has not been any wide research as of yet that helps connect the rise in the status or dignity of women to the inclusion of unpaid labour into the national accounts or GDP. Till now, this has just been a hypothesis, but we also believe that if backed by strong campaigns by the state and the media, the hypothesis can become a certainty.

LS: This brings us to our next question. How can the media and government help in this regard?

SA: With a strong campaign system put in place, the masses will be aware of women's unpaid contribution and learn to value it. For example, let's imagine a rice production system has 22 activities, where at least 17 are performed by women. But finally, when the farmer goes to the market, sells his crops and gets the remuneration — he never comes back home to thank his wife for her contributions. We want that respect; we want the farmers to learn to value his wife's contribution.

We want the media to think in the same line and understand the importance of recognition and how it helps raise the status of women in society and have a positive affect against domestic violence. We should not be the ones to always push the agenda to the frontline, sometimes the media and the state need to take steps on their own, and only with this collective effort can we establish a system that values women's unpaid contributions to society.

On the state level, the success has been apparent. We never had any Finance Minister mention that women's unaccounted work should be recognised. This time, it will be the first when an important government figure mentions

allocations of resources are going to the right places, helping to better the lives of women. For example, services that reduce the drudgery and help women to actively take part in the calculation of GDP — such as professional child rearing services, care for the elderly and the sick, efficient stoves and infrastructural support such as easy access to health care centres, drinkable water facilities etc.

All these, if put into place, frees time for the women, encouraging them to work outside of their homes and become financially independent, ultimately allowing their labour (contributions) be recognised.

LS: One of the most pressing concerns of the 21st century is child marriage. In your opinion will the raise in the status of women, have any effect on its eradication?

SA: Yes, of course. Because when women's domestic work



LS: What does feminism mean to you?

SA: To me, feminism is to challenge the patriarchal system. I always believed that a feminist should support equality between the genders and put on a stance of non-discrimination against men, women, class, and gender across the entire spectrum.

LS: It is probably safe to say that we have come a long way forward in terms of the recognition of feminist beliefs, but then again why does misogyny still exist, and that too, in such a large scale. Where have we failed?

SA: I think it's mostly because social values have deteriorated over the years. The youth today are suffering from alienation, frustration, unemployment, drug addiction, pornography, and so many other negativities. The total impact, an unsolicited amalgamation, has helped to cripple down the value system. We must work in this respect and also, work our way to rebuild it.

LS: You have been a human rights activist for such a long time. Is there any significant change that you have noticed? Any frustrations?

SA: Women are heading into unchartered territories, climbing mountains and even flying jet planes — this is certainly laudable. However, this is from a certain class where the women have received education and support from their families.

Sadly, society's attitude towards women at large has not changed as significantly. Even today, when a girl is born, many parents are not happy, child marriage is one of the highest in the world, sexual assault on women is seen as "her fault" and a woman's work burden and child care is not shared.

LS: According to your point of view, how can patriarchy also harm men?

SA: Patriarchy has a huge negative psychological impact on men. They are under constant pressure to be the bread earner of the family. The common saying is: "If I am the bread earner, then why should I pay heed to another?"

This immense pressure to produce and feed the family makes the man arrogant, defiant, and domineering. So, in order to ease their burden, we must let them know that women and men can and should make equal contributions to the family and society, reducing the mental and physical burden on the former.

**Interview by Mehrin Mubdi Chowdhury
Photo courtesy: Shaheen Anam/
Manusher Jonno Foundation
Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed
Model: Dayyan, Rania**

Our conviction is that recognition of economic contributions has direct connection to the reduction of domestic violence and the status upgrade of women at large.

To me, feminism is to challenge the patriarchal system. I always believed that a feminist should support equality between the genders and put on a stance of non-discrimination against men, women, class, and gender across the entire spectrum.

the contributions of the homemakers and gives it recognition, during the yearly budget announcements. We consider this very fact as our success, or at least baby-steps towards a more gender equal and progressive future.

And there's so much more to be done. We have already mentioned the Household Satellite Accounts System. It is time that the next process is put into action, such as a time-use survey by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) to deduce women's the exact activities not being included in the GDP.

The Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in all 44 ministries needs to be assessed through a more gender approachable lens. The state must make sure that the

is not recognised, parents feel the pressure of poverty, insecurity, and hopelessness. When the status of women is raised and they have more choice, they do not become a burden to the family. This definitely negates the pressure of child marriage because women are no longer looked down upon as a burden.

LS: For tangible empowerment to take place what else must be done?

SA: For empowerment to make a significant impact, the social, economic, and political environment must change in parallel lines. Improvement in one segment with a lag in another will only slow the process. For a certain class stratum, the empowerment has been achieved, or at least the process

WISDOMTOOTH

BY SANIA AIMAN
Sub-Editor, Lifestyle
The Daily Star



Mumpreneurs: Taking away the stigma

All mums are working mothers, only some are salaried...and I want to add about those who are not only not salaried, but create and sustain their own ventures, and generate jobs for others too!

From being a badge that was often worn with pride, and justly so, when the term mumpreneur was first coined, to becoming stigmatised over time, it has had a variety of connotations. Recently, it has sometimes been used to stigmatise and look down upon women entrepreneurs' hard work as mere hobbies along with their main 'job' of raising children.

Essentially, the term mumpreneur refers to female entrepreneurs who juggle a business while being the primary caregivers of their brood, in effect, nurturing babies of two kinds, tiny humans and a business venture, both with varying demands of their own!

To me, the very fact that someone is a full-time mum and working, be it for a salaried position or as a business owner, is amazing in itself. The same applies to dads too, if they happen to be the primary caregivers to their children, although the concept and practice remain very uncommon in our part of the world.

Each human being has various identities in the different roles they play in the variety



of relationships that form families and societies. Each role is important, and fulfilling in different ways. In the modern world, the emphasis is on men and women to receive equal opportunity and rights, but equal opportunity is often misinterpreted as extra privilege. For example, nature has devised that women bear the brunt of creating life and bringing it into the world, and for a certain period of time, it is necessary that mother and baby get quality time together to rest and bond, for the betterment of both, but especially the child, in the long run. Yet, in many offices even today, maternity leave is considered a special privilege despite laws stating otherwise, are granted only reluctantly, and often held against employees who do take it.

One such lady working in the media industry, on condition of anonymity, said that her last performance review held her back and denied a promotion simply

because she had just returned from her maternity leave. This in effect negated all her work prior to and since her leave, and was morale breaking.

It is no wonder then, that after having children, many mums try to launch their own ventures. This gives them a certain level of flexibility, to juggle their creative and entrepreneurial needs, with the demands of child care.

Sabrina Islam Shurovi, is one such mum with multi-dimensional roles. She is at once a mother, a homemaker, an author, as well as module coordinator at SPEED. In her words, she joined a school as it would allow the most time with her toddler, but later moved to the corporate side of things, and now creates modules for teacher training, while working on her own books for toddlers.

"My current employers have been very accommodating, as corporate timings are longer, I start my day earlier than others, and finish by 3:30 PM. This allows me adequate time with my child, who is now a teenager, and also have my own time, all in the day. I also must mention that my daughter and husband have both been very supportive," Sabrina said.

"I am enjoying my different identities," she added.

Being a mumpreneur also allows many women to adjust the workload as per the changing demands on their time, such as with Fatema Sarwar Rashid. She and her partners, all women, have their own jute bag factory called Ananna Enterprise.

This is not her first venture, as Fatema is sort of a serial entrepreneur, having launched her first project while still a student at intermediate level, with boutique work. Later, in 2003, she began to supply woven bags to the likes of Meena Bazar and Agora, but their business policy changes meant that the

type of bags changed and the amount of investment required was a big barrier. Thus, she adapted again, changed her business model, and with her partners, shifted to special promotional products of jute, and now supplies those to various companies. As her children were nearing the milestones in their education careers, she decided to cut back a little from her business work, only to share it more with her partner, in a great example of mumpreneurs helping each other.

"There are certain adjustments all business owners need to make to create a successful enterprise, and I am not any different. I avoid social events if there is an important order going on at the factory, prioritising work and family," Fatema said.

The motivation for mumpreneurs to launch their own businesses can be as different as each mum's personality and personal creed. For Nabila Ameen Bidhu, launching Paatvanga was about promoting what she, and her partners, love — all of 'deshi' handloom's beautiful variety.

"I prefer to buy as much of deshi stuff as I can find, for all types of products. When it came to the handloom of Bangladesh, I myself was surprised to find the beautiful variations available, and the lack of promotions thereof. That is when we decided to start Paatvanga. Capital constraints meant we had to rely on existing product varieties and buy from dealers, but now we are working on creating and launching our own designs," Bidhu said. She also said that all of this was possible because her family had been supportive of her work, and still encourage her to go on.

For Farhana Alam Neela, a teacher at Junior Laboratory School, and a mother to two, a chance idea led her back to her childhood passion of painting, which she now also sells under the Legerity brand.

Neela and her sister used to paint for fun a lot, especially during the long break after their HSC exams. The hobby was then ignored after she got married, but recently, her sister suggested she make one more for their parent's wedding anniversary. That picture, once posted online, got her so many positive reviews and encouragement that Legerity was born.

"I get a lot of support from my parents and husband. Typically, I paint on the weekends or at night, after putting the children to bed," she said.

Reading played a great role in my growing up, and while we all share and face the inherent barriers to movement as women in a largely male-dominated world, there are great examples of those who break through, some with, and more often without the support of their families or the society at large.

The first mumpreneur I learnt about was the trailblazing Khadija (RA), wife of Muhammad (SAW). She was already a widow with children, and 15 years senior to her husband, to whom she proposed marriage. But this happened only after he took one of her trade caravans for business, and impressed all those he worked with. If she could do it then, we can do it now.

There is no stigma in being a mumpreneur, unless it is intentionally inserted by those who use the term. It does not denote a small hobby that also generates income, although there is nothing wrong with that, rather it is a badge to sport with pride, for not many entrepreneurs can claim to successfully run a business while also bringing up children, both gargantuan feats, at a time!

Photo: Paatvanga, Legerity by Farhana Alam Neela



CHECK IT OUT

Niharika Momtaz blends visual art with fashion

Art was never meant to be for walls only. It adds zest to life, in all its aspects. Thinking in that line, designer Niharika Momtaz has recently collaborated with the eminent artist Jamal Ahmed, to create some pieces of exquisite wearable art saris.

The flow of free creativity of an artist is something to marvel at. It is the source of pleasure for the eye and the soul, and is the most difficult to put a price tag on.

Over the years, Jamal Ahmed has created a niche for himself among the art aficionados of the country. His portrayal of women is artistically pleasing, and the series on pigeons is marvellous. While working with Niharika Momtaz, he has worked on saris to transform the vivid images from the canvas to the anchal of the silk saris.

The Jamal-Niharika duo has created a line currently ready for an international fashion show. Jamal's artworks on saris will be displayed at the highest forums as not only artwork, but also work done on textile — wearable art at its best.

Niharika hopes that through this joint endeavour, not only will Bangladeshi art be highlighted, but also the rich heritage of our textile.

-- LS Desk

Wardrobe: Niharika Momtaz

Model: Margo Ili

Photographer: Rische Photography & Films



RECIPES FROM SIAM

BY SHAHEDA YESMIN
Proprietor of Jewel's Kitchen
boutique school



Fish delights

SHRIMP MALAI CURRY

Ingredients

- 500gm (10 pieces) large size shrimp, peeled, deveined, tail intact
- 1 cup homemade thick coconut milk
- ½ cup homemade light coconut milk
- 1 tsp dry chilli powder
- 1 tsp paprika powder
- 1½ tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 tsp sugar
- ½ cup coconut oil
- ½ cup shallot paste
- 1 tsp garlic paste
- 2 tsp ginger paste
- 1-inch cinnamon stick



- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 6-7 green chillies
- ¼ cup caramelised onion

Method

Marinate the shrimp with ½ teaspoon turmeric powder and a pinch of salt. Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a frying pan, fry the shrimp for one minute on each side and remove. In a wok, add oil, stir in onion, garlic and ginger paste with cinnamon sticks. Fry until aroma is released. Add dry chilli, paprika, turmeric, salt and sugar with



the light coconut milk. Keep stirring until oil floats to the top. Add the fried shrimp, thick coconut milk, and green chilli. Cover and cook on high heat for 10 minutes. Sprinkle the caramelised onion and lemon juice. Adjust the taste. Cover and cook on low heat or 2-3 minutes, and serve.

SPICY FISH WITH BASIL LEAVES

Ingredients

- 400gm Basa fish fillet, cubed
- 10 bird's eye chillies
- 6 garlic cloves, thumb sized
- 4 coriander roots
- ¼ cup oil
- 2 cups holy basil leaves
- ¼ cup red spur chilli, thinly sliced
- 2 tbsp fish sauce
- 1 tbsp soya sauce
- 1 tbsp oyster sauce
- 1 tbsp sugar
- ½ cup water

Method

In a mortar, add coriander root, garlic cloves and bird's eye chilli to make a paste. Add oil in a wok, set to high heat, add the coriander paste from the mortar. Stir-fry until it softens and a strong aroma develops. Add the fish fillet cubes and all the seasoning. Add the water and cover. Cook for 10-12 minutes, or until the fish is tender. Add the



holy basil, and mix well. Adjust the taste, remove from heat and serve.

SMALL SARDINES WITH BABY SPINACH TOPPED WITH CORN SALSA

Ingredients

- 1 cup white grape juice
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 2 tbsp chopped green chilli pickle
- 1 tbsp adobo sauce
- 1 tsp chopped garlic
- 3 (300gm approx.) small sardine fish
- For the spinach —*
- 1 tbsp butter
- 1 tsp garlic, minced
- ¼ tsp salt
- 100gm baby spinach
- For the corn salsa —*
- 1/3 cup corn kernels
- 1 tbsp chopped green chillies
- 2 tbsp diced red onion
- ½ cup diced tomatoes
- 2 tsp lemon juice

- ½ tsp sea salt
- ¼ cup chopped coriander leaves

Method

Combine white grape juice, lemon juice, green chilli pickle, adobo sauce and garlic. Pour over fish and marinate in the refrigerator for 2 hours, remove, and pat dry.

Preheat oven to 250° C. Place the fish in a buttered baking dish. Bake for 15 minutes or until done. Heat a frying pan and fry the garlic until light golden brown. Add salt and spinach. Stir fry for 5 minutes and remove from the heat.

Prepare corn salsa: combine all ingredients in a saucepan, except coriander leaves, and heat until warm. Remove from the heat and sprinkle the coriander leaves.

Place baby spinach on a platter, top with the fish and spoon-on corn salsa.

Photo courtesy: Shaheda Yesmin

HANGRY

BY SARIA SAGUARO
I have two moods.
Cooking helps both!



BETROOT AND FETA CHEESE SALAD

Ingredients

- 4 medium beetroots
- 60gm feta cheese
- 2 tbsp chopped parsley
- Lemon vinaigrette
- 3 tbsp lemon juice
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ tsp black pepper
- ½ tsp salt, or to taste

Method

Boil the beetroot on medium heat for 45 minutes, or until it can be easily pierced through with a knife. The skin will easily peel off. After removing the skin of the beetroots, chop the beetroot into cubes and do the same with the feta cheese.

Roughly chop the parsley. For the vinaigrette, mix all ingredients together in a bowl and whisk slightly. Combine beetroot, feta cheese, and parsley with the lemon vinaigrette and serve.

BABY POTATO AND PEAS SALAD

Ingredients

- 1 kg new potatoes
- 2 cups peas
- 3 tbsp sour cream
- Handful of chopped parsley
- Handful of chopped mint leaves
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 2 tsp lemon juice
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp black pepper

Salad story



Method

Cook new potatoes in lightly salted boiling water for 15 to 20 minutes, until tender, and drain and cool completely. Peel the peas and boil them for 2 minutes in slightly salted water, and drain and cool completely. Mix potatoes and peas together and add the lemon juice, lemon zest, and sour cream. Season with salt and pepper. Mix in the chopped parsley and mint leaves and serve.

Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed
Food: Saria Saguro

TRAVELOGUE

In the belly of the Earth

Picture yourself standing in half-darkness amid naturally-forming calcite columns, cascades, stalactites and stalagmites sixteen storeys under the surface of the Earth. It is eerily beautiful down there. The ambience is primitive, and your surroundings feel uncanny, because your mind keeps telling you that all of this had formed over an estimated span of four million years. The limestone formations you see around you are still forming and changing every day.

Luray Caverns, in Virginia, USA, is an active cave system. Located in the lush Shenandoah Valley, to the west of Blue Ridge Mountains in Luray, Virginia, Luray Caverns was discovered in 1878. Today, it is a registered National Natural Landmark (NNL), visited by some 500,000 people annually from all over the U.S. and the world.

Before we decided on visiting this awe-inspiring feat of nature, we had to find out if it would be too cold in February. We found out that the caverns' temperature remains unchanged at all times of the year. It is indeed mysterious down below!

No matter what the outside temperature is, the temperature inside the caverns is a constant 12° Celsius. With high humidity resulting from water constantly seeping through the cave's roof, walls, and floor, the temperature may feel as high as 18°.

In short, one can visit Luray Caverns any day, any season.

This marvel of nature is open to the



public 365 days a year. The cost of entry is \$30 for an adult. Tourists are not allowed to enter the caverns alone; you have to take a group tour led by a guide.

As you walk through the cave, you are left in awe of the geological wonders that have formed over millions of years. Once inside, let your imagination soar, because the limestone formations resemble anything from shawls, draperies, scarves and veils to fried eggs, columns and woolly mammoths!

MAJOR ATTRACTIONS

Man continues to conquer what is on, above and below the Earth's surface. You will get

a glimpse of the extent of man's relentless expedition inside these caverns. Today, 141 years after its discovery, one can easily marvel at this cave system using its step-free paved walkways. Indirect lighting installed inside the caverns not only creates an aura of mystery, but also allows visitors to take a better look at its best features.

Dream Lake

It is a crystal-clear pool inside the caverns. The water is so clear that it creates an optical illusion, making stalactites hanging from the cave's roof appear to be stalagmites protruding from the bottom of the pool. The Dream Lake and the mirror-image of stalactites that form in its crystalline water are out of the world!

Fried-eggs

These are two stone formations resembling



fried-eggs, sunny-side up. These formations are not natural, though, but the result of damages to stalagmites caused by Luray

Caverns workers three decades ago. You will be impressed by how much these broken stalagmites bear resemblance to the fried eggs so many of us relish over breakfast every morning!

The Great Stalacpipe Organ

Known as the world's largest musical instrument, when electrically activated, it produces mysteriously beautiful musical tones. These rather unearthly tones are produced when rubber mallets hit thirty-seven different stalactites located across the cave!

Standing 164 feet underground, I felt small and negligible in the face of the massive stalactites that formed over four million years. Luray Caverns is one of the best examples of America's rich geological heritage. On the whole, this is a must-see site if a traveller ever visits the country's East Coast.

Let me wrap up this travelogue by sharing the lines from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's famous poetry, Kubla Khan, that are etched in stone at the entrance of the caverns.

*"In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea."*

By Wara Karim

Photo: Wara Karim

THANK GOD IT'S FRIDAY

BY TANZIRAL DILSHAD
DITAN



EMK BOOK CLUB | BOOKS FOR ENCOURAGEMENT

Date: Tuesday, 3 March, 2020

Time: 4:30 PM – 6:30 PM

Venue: EMK Center, Midas Center Building (9th Floor) House-5, Road-16, Dhanmondi, Dhaka

EMK Center presents a book club for the book worm in you. For the month of March, the designated book is "Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead" by Sheryl Sandberg. The theme for the event is Books for Encouragement, which has been chosen in accordance to the upcoming International Women's Day 2020.

Two prominent contemporary female Bangladeshi writers will be present to discuss the book with the audience. See you there!

The event is free for all.

JOY BANGABANDHU: PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION BY NASIR ALI MAMUN

Date: Friday, 6 March, 2020 to Friday, 20 March, 2020

Venue: La Galerie, Alliance Francaise

Just after the liberation war in 1971 Nasir Ali Mamun's camera defined portraiture in Bangladesh that eventually ushered in portrait photography in the country. Being 'the poet with the camera', Mamun has taken some of the most iconic portraits

Recitals and Music

Bangladesh has ever seen. His black and white images display a beautiful yet enigmatic and equivocal coalescence of light and shadow.

Mamun took many portraits of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the early seventies and recorded his rare moments from close up. Dedicated to the freedom fighters of Bangladesh, this solo exhibition titled 'Joy Bangabandhu' will showcase previously unpublished and historic photographs of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and will celebrate the 100th birth anniversary of the 'Father of the Nation'.

JOY BANGLA CONCERT 2020

Date: Saturday, 7 March, 2020

Time: 12 PM – 10 PM

Venue: Bangladesh Army Stadium

Young Bangla is back again with the biggest event of the year.

Joy Bangla Concert is being held for the sixth consecutive year on 7th March 2020 at the Bangladesh Army Stadium, Dhaka.

Joy Bangla Concert is organised each year by Young Bangla-CRI on the day of the historic 7th March speech of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The event, staged at the Bangladesh Army stadium, Dhaka, is one of largest musical events in Bangladesh.

This year, there will be performances by popular rock bands, modern rock, pop and folk artists who will cover their own music along with modern rock renditions of patriotic songs broadcast by the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra in 1971.

As this year's concert will be the first mega event of the 100th Birth Anniversary, Mujib Borsho, Young Bangla has arranged for a mix of entertaining and patriotic music from the leading musical bands and solo along with a host of other never before seen attractions.

This year's lineup includes: F Minor, Minar, Avoid Rafa, Shunno, Vikings, Fuad & Friends, Lalon, Arbovirus, Chirkut, Cryptic Fate, and Nemesis.

Free registration: https://ticket.youngbangla.org/?fbclid=IwAR1NZ87sDWNKL18LU3iWAlAJ5QNI6Z-yhK_owqtjL4lxvqdBsUuUm42RnPU

STONE FREE ACOUSTIC SESSIONS III

Date: Saturday, March 7, 2020

Time: 7 PM – 9:30 PM

Venue: Roll Xpress Café, House# 34, Road# 21, Block -B, Banani

After a four year hiatus, Roll Xpress Cafe invites Stone Free to play their eclectic set of classic covers. Stone Free will perform their third rendition of Acoustic Sessions with a setlist covering the music of Dire Straits, Jimi

Hendrix, Bob Dylan, Bob Marley, America, Tracy Chapman, Bruce Springsteen, Simon & Garfunkel, and many others.

Come join our favourite musicians for a relaxed evening with friends in the outdoor courtyard at Roll Xpress Cafe.

Limited seating on first come basis. Entrance: Tk. 800 per person of 18 years and above. Please collect your tickets ASAP from the cafe counter. Call 01720100016 for more information.

CÉLIMÈNE DAUDET PIANO RECITAL

Date: Sunday, March 8

Time: 6:30 PM – 7:30 PM

Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, 14/3 Segunbagicha, Dhaka

Accomplished French-Haitian pianist soloist Célimène Daudet has performed at some of the most distinguished venues in the world. Daudet also plays regularly at major festivals and concert halls in France all year round. In 2016 she recorded the first volume of an integral of Beethoven's ten sonatas for piano and violin with the violinist Amanda Flavier, published by NoMadMusic.

Open to all, free entry on a first come first served basis.

For more information on the concert, please visit: www.celimene-daudet.com.

An equal world is an enabled world

FROM PAGE 6

Then there are so many laws installed, but where is the implementation? Why are we so slow in putting into operation what we have made official? For example, there has already been a mandate to establish a sexual harassment committee at every institution, but how many have actually complied with the establishment?

My point is, since we have already moved five steps forward – it is about time we take five more steps.

LS: An equal world is an enabled world — What does it mean to you?

HH: For one, I have certainly not seen an equal world as of yet. In my own life, I have had to face small cases of discrimination during my childhood, even though I came from a very progressive family. And while working for Ain O Salish Kendra, I met so many women, especially from the slums, who face scrutiny on a daily basis. They don't even know who or where to turn to!

But things have slightly improved today, with the advent of numerous women organizations and BLAST (Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust), women can now share their experiences, and get help.

LS: How can the media help?

HH: Cover more about these subjects — voice your opinions and continue to see the ends to a pressing topic. Find out who the perpetrators are, and why they are carrying out harmful activities. Assess

the psychology; try to change the archaic culture that leads to filth and mental degradation.

LS: Today women are included in the board-rooms; they are becoming top level executives and CEOs. Does this signify as progress to you?

HH: Gender equal boardrooms represent a certain class. To assess real progress, we must find out the representation of women workers in the trade unions. What say do they have in these associations? A board-room representative is just one person, while grass roots level employees are many. Therefore, a true representation of progress is indicated by the advancement of the latter.

LS: Collective Individualism, a catchphrase of the 2020 IWD celebrations. What does it signify?

HH: I will be a little sceptical here. Of

course, the fact is when people work together, they go forward in leaps and bounds. In our country's perspective, we see that the men come together to promote an agenda. But the same is not true for women. There's also collective effort from people of the same class, but almost none between the classes. So, this definitely has to go a long way before a true representation takes place.

LS: As a forthright human rights activist who has been vocal for such a long period of time, what would you say are your major frustrations?

HH: We have certainly come 'forward' in ratifying conventions. But there are so many details that are written in these conventions that need to be implemented. Rights of the constitutions — right to life, right to work. In terms of expressing thoughts, we have certainly been successful, but why the lag in implementation?

Domestic violence is still very high. Where is the solution?

The government cannot even help in these regards because sometimes, it is beyond the scope of laws and regulations and more about the ingrained archaic culture.

LS: Do you have any solutions in mind?

HH: Challenge the system, the culture, and etch out smart ways to deal with difficulties. For example, women face abuse when they ride public transport. But this usually happens when a lady travels alone. So why not travel in groups to prevent harassment. And this is perhaps the case with 'women' garments workers. They move in groups whenever they have to travel.

Then there is a significant role played by the media: encouraging the society at large to take the help of the various human aid organisations in the country, asking the victims to make use of the governmental 'one stop crisis centre' and many other legal aid organisations and hospitals available in the country.

You have to speak more about it and write more about it. You are actually doing that here, aren't you? And I guess that is what progress is all about.

By Mehrin Mubdi Chowdhury

Photo: Hameeda Hossain/Sazzad Ibne Sayed

Model: Dayyan, Rania, Anaya



A financially independent woman is a free woman

FROM PAGE 7

stakeholders who can give concrete input for developing an acceptable methodology for incorporating women's unaccounted contribution in the GDP. This will help with recognition of women's contribution to the economy and society.

Secondly, the government should also put adequate attention to reduction of and redistribution of unpaid work. The government may undertake programmes which can contribute to reduce women's workload within the household. Examples of such initiatives may include increasing access to drinking water and natural gas for cooking, as well as establishing childcare centres, which may in turn reduce the time spent by women on household work.

Stricter legal measures should be introduced by the government to eliminate wage discrimination against women in all sectors, as lower wages compared to men is one of the key reasons behind lower contribution of women in the national economy. NGOs and women's organisations could play an active role towards this.

I strongly believe that a gradual reduction in the time spent on unpaid care activities, traditionally performed by women, can make the society better off.

LS: Pink Tax is something that we are all aware of. And this is existent in every discipline. Women are paying more for

essentially everything they purchase in the name of marketing. Can you elaborate on this from an economic aspect?

FK: Quite often, an extra amount of hidden tax is imposed for women's products. This method of pricing for products used by women is a price discrimination. In my mind, Pink tax is an unfair price hike for products that women use.

In the context of Bangladesh, many products that are used by women, such as cosmetics, beauty products, shampoo and sanitary napkins, and even services such as beauty parlours and salons, are taxed differently than male oriented services. Such tax is discriminatory. They do not follow economic logic. Particularly, products like sanitary napkin is an essential hygiene product and not a luxury item. These are needed by women from all types of economic backgrounds. Any discriminatory measures against women should be demolished. But I feel the issue of Pink Tax is still a less discussed issue in Bangladesh. There is a lack of awareness among the shopkeepers and customers. But the key responsibility lies with the manufacturers, who put a price tag on products, and with the policy makers who formulate regulatory measures.

Interview by Mehrin Mubdi Chowdhury

Photo: Fahmida Khatun

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CHECK IT OUT

Training the path with light

On the 28th of February, Bangladesh's first fine perfume brand started its journey with the soft launch of "Jonaki fragrance by Nasreen Zamir" at the Grand Ballroom of the Westin. In a programme graced by top diplomats of the country, the event also offered the guests a chance to view and purchase the perfume itself. Named after the Jonaki, local firefly whose symbiosis with nature enchanted and beguiled Nasreen Zamir in her childhood growing up in the port city of Chittagong, replete with its beautiful hills and serene lakes and rivers. The perfume is inspired by the firefly and hopes to create something unique, focusing on the much-vaunted scent of Bengali flowers.

In her keynote address, Nasreen Zamir, a reputed interior designer and entrepreneur, spoke about the need to save the fireflies

whose population is decreasing due to environmental problems. A sizeable amount of the profits from the perfume will be channeled to saving the fireflies, which have for generations illuminated the world around us. She spoke of her dream of making the perfume wide and accessible to everyone in Bangladesh, giving them a unique and exquisite taste of nature.

The fragrance designed here in Bangladesh, inspired by France, and manufactured in Malaysia, offers the best cross pollination of art and design coupled with decades of experience. Jonaki is the joy of light that the perfume wants to permeate in the lives of its users.

The Ambassador of the Kingdom of Netherlands, H.E Harry Verweij, spoke on the importance of a perfume as it can bring to a person's nose the culture and aroma of



one's heritage and evoke a beautiful memory. He called perfume an art stemming from sophistry and harmony. Lamiya Morshed, Executive Director of Yunus Centre, expressed

her great pleasure at this groundbreaking work and hoped to see more female entrepreneurs making such leaps in the future. Anjan Chowdhury, Managing Director of Square Toiletries, and Director of Square, called Jonaki an international standard product that he hoped to see being sold beyond the country's borders.

There are three Jonaki fragrances for women and two for men. For women, it is Neroli Blossom, Freesia Nights, and Oriental Jasmine, evoking refreshing floral and citrusscents. For men, Amaretto and Santal Tabac offer serene aromas and beguiling musk.

The launch event, for the brand by Square Toiletries, was organised by Red Dot Multimedia.

By Israr Hasan

READER'S CHIT

My experience at Isha Foundation

I started my journey full of joy and excitement, as this yoga retreat was long awaited and I finally got the chance to attend it. Isha Yoga Centre is a concern of the Isha foundation. There are five kinds of yoga — Bhakti, Karma, Gyana, Raja, and Hatha — which contain physical postures and asanas. Most people are quite familiar with Hatha Yoga.

Isha Foundation works with all five areas of yoga with equal importance. It is almost entirely run by volunteers and almost no one is a formal employee. From cooking and cleaning to teaching and administration, everything is done by volunteers who come from different corners of the world. This is their form of doing Karma Yoga. At the same time, their services count as Bhakti Yoga, as they are doing the work out of compassion and love for everyone.

The founder of Isha Foundation is

Sadhguru, a mystic who is spreading knowledge about life and one's own self. Through Hatha Yoga, Isha Foundation also encourages its members to be intensely physically active.

I started following Sadhguru's work his work ever since I read his book, Inner Engineering, almost four years ago. I have been doing Hatha Yoga for a few years now. After reading it, I came to know that an Inner Engineering retreat is held at Isha Foundation in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.

I always wanted to visit Sadhguru's self-made paradise, and managed approval, after many attempts, for then at the end of December, 2019. The Inner Engineering Yoga Retreat contains Hatha Yoga, Breathing, Meditation and a lot of theory-based lectures. I stayed the week on campus for the residential event.

After flights and road trips to Coimbatore, it took one and half hours to reach Isha

Foundation. Coimbatore is a beautiful city, and thanks to my amicable guide, I was able to see some of it before I began my retreat. Even at the end of December, the weather was warm and sunny.

Upon reaching Isha Foundation, I was awed. There were people everywhere, volunteers going about their chores, but everyone was completely silent. Without an urgent need, nobody uttered a word, and most worked barefoot.

There were some obvious formalities and long lines for initiation to the programme, but everyone waited patiently. I realised here, stressful tasks can be blissfully simple only if we have respect for those around us.

I wish everybody could visit this place just to see how something situated very much in the modern world can be made into a paradise, only with the essence of love, care and patience.

My programme was about the idea that

in order to know oneself, one should look inwards rather than outward. Yoga helps to make us aware of our own abilities. It is a lifelong journey, or a lifestyle. Though the programme itself helped me a lot in organising my life in a profound way, I believe that people should practice the teachings in their daily lives.

It is difficult to have the motivation or achieve the highest echelons of success, but I believe it is possible to be the best versions of our own self.

From all over the world, true seekers have found themselves at Isha Foundation, which truly makes it a multicultural celebration of life. The different backgrounds of the people and their life stories make Isha Foundation more vibrant and colourful. But from Bangladesh, I was the only one to experience the serenity.

By Faria Athar Khan

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