

# TOGGLE

WEEKEND LIVING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

A publication of *The Daily Star*

## ONE FOR THE PLANET

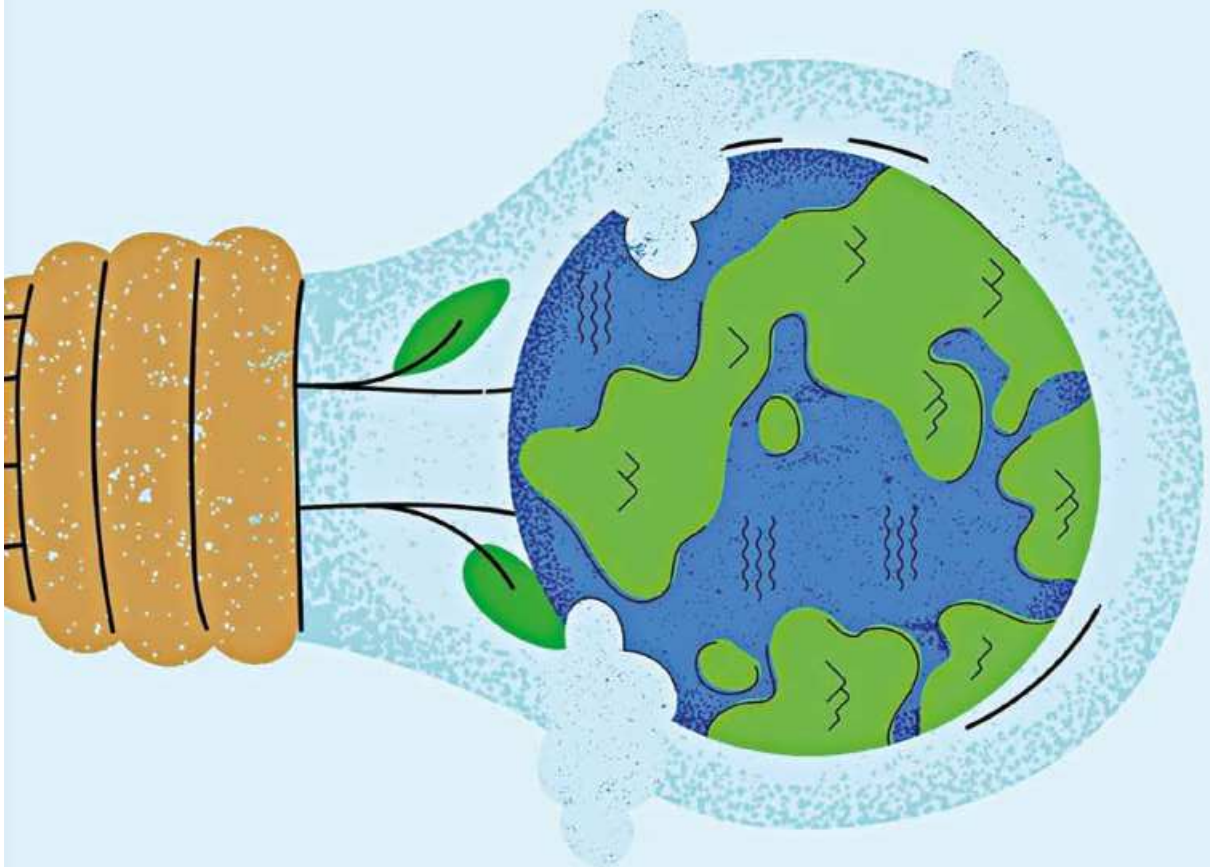


ILLUSTRATION:  
ZARIF FALAZ

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Bidyut Kumar Shaha  
Father: Newul Chandra Shaha  
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This initiative is taken to ensure maximum customer facilities through research & development of products and digitization.  
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## Walton launches three new All-in-One PCs

Walton has recently launched three new Unify S22 series models of All-in-One PC for the Bangladesh market. The models are: Intel's 10th Gen Pentium Gold (1TB HDD + 128GB SSD), Core i3 (1TB HDD + 128GB SSD) and Core i5 (1TB HDD + 256GB SSD) processors. All variants have 8 GB 2666 MHz DDR4 RAM and 32 GB expandability. They all have 21.5-inch anti-glare FHD displays, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth and a 2.0-megapixel webcam etc.

Price: Ranging from BDT 43,950 to BDT 56,850/- + 2 years of after-sales service



## Google Earth to receive its biggest update since 2017

Google has announced their Google Earth software is receiving its biggest update since its redesign in 2017.

The update will add a 3D time-lapse mode that brings together 24 million satellite photos from the last 37 years. Viewers will be able to see how the rural development, effects of urbanization and the adverse effect of climate change at various places of the earth.

## NEW CAR THIS WEEK Mercedes debuts electrified S class

With more and more German companies embracing the power of lightning, it was only a matter of time before the three-pointed star rolled out their own EV luxe barge.

The 2022 Mercedes-Benz EQS is the company's first step into the EV market, a full-size luxury sedan that rivals the company's own S class in terms of technology and luxury. The exterior of the car is remarkably sleek, with Mercedes stating "body creases have had their day at Mercedes-Benz." The sleekness grants the car a record-breaking 0.20 drag coefficient, which comes at the cost of odd quirks such as a sealed front hood. On the inside, the dashboard is one 56-inch-wide pane of curved glass with three separate screens, courtesy of their MBUX

infotainment system. Rear passengers also get their own 12.3-inch touchscreen, while the rest of the car is covered in leather, wood and other premium material. In terms of performance, the top-of-the-line EQS 580 4MATIC sends 516 hp and 611 lb-ft of torque to all four of its wheels, with a 0-100 of 4.1 seconds. Despite the eye flashing performance, the car achieves a range of 770 kilometres on the WLTP standard, the highest in the category. Of course, all these come with an eye-watering sticker price of \$120,000, making it one of the priciest cars in its segment.



## EDITOR'S NOTE If not now, when?

No matter what Elon Musk says, there's only one planet to live and breathe, for the foreseeable future at least. This planet is our home, and it is up to us to take care of it and save it. This weekend, we bring out a special issue dedicated to mother Earth, celebrating the World Earth Day that just passed by the day before. In the centrefold, we feature an eco-friendly project that grows papers out of recycled materials and the papers, in turn, grow into plants. In Bytes, we look at green tech-trends that promise to save the planet. And for the last page, we advise you on how to make your home greener.

We hope you find the articles in this issue insightful. And we hope you act. Because, if not now, when?

Zarif Faiaz, *Sub-editor*

## TOGGLE

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## SpaceX wins NASA contract for new lunar lander

NASA announced SpaceX to be the winner of the Human Landing System (HLS) contract, a critical component of the administration's plan to return to the moon.

With the winning bid of 2.9 billion US dollars, the California based company will now have the privilege of developing the ship by which NASA astronauts will return to our moon's surface for the first time since the Apollo program.

HLS is a key part of NASA's

Artemis program, a U.S. government-funded international human spaceflight program to return to the moon. The program will begin with unmanned flights, followed by a moon flyby with a crewed craft, and eventually a manned lunar landing at the south pole of the moon.

Three companies — SpaceX, Blue Origin and Dynetics— bid for the HLS contract last year. And while the other two companies have built full-scale models of their system, SpaceX

was the only company to actively test functional prototypes. The company also reportedly undercut both prospective suppliers considerably with its bid, according to The Washington Post.

The planned landing mission has a planned fly date of 2024. SpaceX is working with Maxar to deliver components of the Lunar Gateway satellite with their Falcon Heavy Rocket, another core component of the Artemis program.



# Saving options for those new to the work life

ZAKIA SAMEEN NOOR

Earning income is a fantastic feeling. It's the main pathway to adulthood. No wonder most of us are obsessed with finding ways to earn money.

After this hurdle, the next challenge is to save your income and grow it. Conventional wisdom tells you to save first and spend later. But, it doesn't specify how to do so.

Hopefully, by the end of this article, you will have an idea of how to save and grow your new hard-earned money.

## DPS

Deposit Pension Scheme or DPS bank account is an easy automated savings option for anyone earning money. Here, you can deposit a fixed chunk of your salary every month, starting at 500 BDT and going up to 20,000 BDT or more. The total amount of money you save at the end of your term is known as the maximum maturity value. You get to decide your maximum maturity value and the number of years of your saving period (usually 3 years). You can even choose a DPS option which allows you to save a million taka by the end of your term.

Depending on the number of years, different interest rates will be charged. While the average interest rate is approximately 5%, some banks charge higher interest rates. For example, Trust Bank charges an interest rate of 8.24%.

## FDR

Getting a Fixed Deposit Receipt (FDR) (also known as Time Deposit in the Western countries) can be a suitable option if you're risk-averse, have a good portion of money available to save, and earn a high yield after a fixed period. Interest rates tend to be higher for FDR than for normal savings accounts. In fact, the longer the time period of FDR, the higher will be the interest rates.

FDR is basically a receipt the bank gives you certifying that you have a fixed deposit in that bank for a stipulated period of time. The deposit in a fixed deposit tends to be higher than the savings deposits. Also, you don't withdraw any amount from your fixed deposit until the end of its maturity. If you do, you might have to pay a hefty charge to the bank and may even miss out on earning interest. Although the cost of premature withdrawal is a disadvantage, the benefit is that this is a backup option during severe cash flow crises.

It's not necessary for you to break your FDR either during such crises. You can

simply avail a loan against your FDR for upto 80-90%. That too, at a lower interest rate since the FDR is a much more secured collateral for your loan.

## SHARE MARKET

If you're fascinated by stocks and enjoy analysing them, you might be interested in investing your money in the share market.

However, there are a few things to keep in mind:

- i) Have a strong grasp of basic financial literacy.
- ii) Be in this game for the long haul.
- iii) Understand your psychology, especially when it comes to money
- iv) Make calculated rational decisions and not emotion-driven ones
- v) Seek expert help from only trusted professionals if needed
- vi) Keep in touch with economic and financial news and relate these with stock analysis

Now, to invest in the share market in Bangladesh, you must have a Beneficiary Account (BO). This is the account through which you can buy/sell shares and earn profit. To open a BO, you'll need a bank account and general documentation like NID/passport and passport-size photographs of yourself and nominee. You can open your BO online or with the help of a reputed brokerage house. The brokerage house will guide you in your stock analysis and keep you updated with market trends. It is important to pick the right brokerage house you can trust and rely on as the way you manage your money will depend a lot on them.

Investing your hard-earned money in the stock market can be scary. Thus, you must be careful and do a lot of studying and research on your own. At the same time, keep your eyes and ears open. You can reap immense rewards from investing in the share market.

## MUTUAL FUND

A new up-and-coming option in

Bangladesh, mutual funds are basically investment funds created by pooling money from various investors who wish to purchase securities (stocks, bonds, equities, etc). The funds are managed by professionals whose goal is to allocate the funds such that investors can earn the maximum gains or income from the portfolio. So, if you don't have the time to do stock analysis, you can rest assured that your investments will be taken care of by multiple protectors.

What's more, as per the Tax Ordinance, 1984, you save a lot of money as the amount you invest in the mutual fund gets a full tax rebate.

Each of us has different needs when it comes to investing. Also, we need to diversify our investment funds. All this can be done in mutual funds. Moreover, you can opt for liquidity any time you want if you invest in an open-ended mutual fund.

## SANCHAYAPATRA

Also known as savings certificates, Sanchayapatra has the highest yield out of all the other options listed here. It's also the safest investment choice as it is backed by the Government itself. This makes investing in Sanchayapatra a lucrative opportunity for low-income and middle-income groups.

There are four different sanchayapatra schemes with two for varied classes of people. For example, the five-year Family Sanchayapatra is specifically for adult females.

To get a Sanchayapatra, you need to have an NID. Other forms of identification won't do.

Also, if you invest more than 1 lakh BDT, you will need a photocopy of your TIN certificate.

**Investing in real-estate, farming and other high growth-high return projects i.e. startups**

Investing in real estate provides a very high and consistent return. More

importantly, owning real estate means owning assets that have value. Plus, this value appreciates with time. Earning income from real estate is a lucrative option if you want to diversify your savings and/or income sources.

Bangladesh is still predominantly a country dependent on agriculture. Around 15% of our GDP comprises agriculture. Plus, the demand for farming products like crops, dairy, meat, etc will always be there since these are necessities.

Thus, the farming sector presents a lot of opportunities to develop agricultural business ideas that can boost the economy. Investing in such ideas is bound to reap massive benefits after a while. Moreover, investing in farming is safer and more secured since it provides more long-term value than you would receive when investing in the stock market.

At the same time, the startup scene in Bangladesh is growing. Recently, 4 Bangladeshi startups got selected for the Accelerating Asia incubator in Singapore. Even the Bangladesh Bank has announced a 500 crore taka fund for financing startups. Most importantly, if you have the sufficient savings to invest in a scalable startup, you have the potential to earn massive returns than you would elsewhere. You also get to diversify your savings portfolio.

## ISLAMIC SAVINGS INSTRUMENTS

The primary component of conventional banking systems is interest, where there is a winner and a loser. This is prohibited in Islamic finance. The main philosophy behind Islamic finance is risk-sharing in both parties, which makes shariah investments more equitable and more secured. Also, Shariah investments cannot be made in ethically ambiguous industries like alcohol, pork, and gambling industries.

The global Islamic Financial system is predicted to increase to USD 3.78 trillion next year. The growing interest in Islamic Finance means you too can be a part of this system. Luckily, Bangladesh has numerous Islamic banks adhering to Shariah principles enabling financial inclusion for us all.

This guide is just an introduction to the myriad ways you can save and invest your money to grow your income. We hope this inspires you to take control of your income now and become a much more financially savvy and independent citizen of Bangladesh.



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building a safer nation

**BUILD YOUR HOME FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS WITH THE TOUGHEST STEEL**

**BSRM Xtreme**  
**B500 DWR**  
the tough steel



Mercedes W124 500E

# Faraway cousins of the Stuttgart stallions

## Performance cars with Porsche underpinnings

AHBAAR MOHAMMAD

### BENTLEY CONTINENTAL

One of the many perks of being a Volkswagen Auto Group sibling is getting to raid the closet, or in this case, the parts bin of Porsche. That is exactly what Bentley turned to when co-developing the new Continental GT, which goes like a spaceship thrust by the W12, while corners like one too (if spaceships could corner) thanks to the Porsche Panamers toolkit.

### FASCINATION ON THE NURBURGRING.

While some tend to associate RUF with a viral montage of an onboard and aerial footage of the yellowbird tail happily gliding through the Nordschleife, most of us subconsciously associate the yellow 911 (which is a severe understatement) with the playstation, namely Gran Turismo, with no small thanks to EA and Porsche's exclusive licensing honeymoon period. Since RUFs manufactured unmarked 911's with their own specific VIN's, the German marque is technically a manufacturer in its own right. However, blank 911s were not the only canvas RUF played with. The RUF Dakar was a Porsche Cayenne, with widened track, a plush interior and 911 headlights. Not



Ruf CTR Yellowbird



Singer Octagon Commission 911

quirky enough for you? RUF's Deucalion (Dr. Frankenstein's monster) was a 993's 3.6-litre twin-turbo powerplant strapped to a VW T4 van.

### 911 REIMAGINED AND REMASTERED

911 recreations have always been more of an art piece than tools of precision driving. Such is the case with Singer 911, a no expenses spared, turned up to eleven, reimagined 964 that drives as good as it looks, and looks as good as it sounds.

Similarly, Guenther werks remasters 993's in a treatment akin to Singer; bespoke reiteration down to the nuts and bolts.

### KOENIG SPECIALS

Purveyor of souped-up Ferrari's of the



Bentley Continental

era, was no stranger to Porsche, as disbanded group C left an abundance of arguably the most successful customer Porsche chassis, the 962. The mad men at Koenig simply offered to road convert the race car for the road which translated to completely reworking the 962 tube chassis out of carbon fibre, detuning the engine, adding code-



Lykan HyperSport

compliant head and tail lights and installing A/C to name a few. And voila, an actual race car for the road.

### W MOTORS

W Motors made their debut on the big screen with the launch of Fast and Furious 7. Powered by a RUF developed, quintessentially Porsche 3.7-litre twin-turbo drivetrain, the Lykan HyperSport is the first Arab supercar



Koenig C62

to move under its own power, unlike the much contentious Devel Sixteen. Moreover, a 3.8 litre RUF developed flat 6 seems to be the choice of power house and drivetrain for the Lykan Fenry SuperSport coupled with Porsche's proprietary PDK gearbox.

### HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Even though every bit of the Mercedes W124 500E is deservingly Mercedes, however, engineers hired then strapped for cash Porsche to fit the massive V8 under the bonnet snug, to which Porsche replied with a dosage of flared body styling, evident on the hood itself and the fenders all around. The entire process took 18 days, as the 500E travelled back and forth in-between the two factories.

Porsche's greatest wagon that isn't a Sport Turismo and Audi's first RS car: the RS2 Avant was as every bit a Porsche as it was an Audi. Produced at the very same zuffenhausen production assembly line as the 500E was, the co-developed Audi received instantly recognisable 964 wheels and mirrors along with ever so special badges. And the nogaro? Enough said. And for a very short period, you could see a Porsche, Mercedes and an Audi all under the same roof.



Audi RS2 Avant

# Promoting environmental awareness with plantable seed paper 'Bonkagoj'

JINAT JAHAN KHAN

Piles of papers and paper products are adding more to the landfill waste day by day. Human consumption of such products cannot be reduced abruptly despite its adverse effects. However, this disposal of papers can be turned into a way to save the environment by creating a safe alternative for these discarded ones. One of the most impactful remedies is to use seed paper. It is a biodegradable handmade paper, which is made from recycled paper and embedded with different plant seeds. Shalbrikkho—a startup working with biodegradable and recycled products came up with its project 'Bonkagoj' to promote such plantable seed papers in Bangladesh.



### FROM DISCARDED PAPERS TO SEED PAPERS

While working with renewable energy solutions as well as biodegradable and recycled products, Shalbrikkho has always been careful about using minimum papers or better alternatives for their work purposes. "The idea of recycling used papers just struck us when we were making visiting cards for Shalbrikkho. As we continued to work on this, we thought

of embedding seeds in these papers to make them eco-friendly. And the result was our Bonkagoj", said Mahbub Sumon, the founder of this organisation. It took around 2 years to complete their experiments and launch this product, officially in December 2019.

The procedure of making Bonkagoj is similar to that of traditional handmade paper. But as seeds are embedded in these papers, some unconventional methods are also introduced to complete the whole procedure. For Bonkagoj, they collect and shred waste papers and then soak the paper scraps until it gets mushy. Converting this mush into a pulp through some steps, they make the papers in a particular size by using the pulp and different seeds. The process to make the seed paper from the prepared pulp takes around 22 hours. Due to its complicated methods and limited capacity, the team



of Bonkagoj can make 50 seed papers per day for now.

Most of the pieces of machinery for the whole procedure are customised by Mahbub Sumon and his team according to their convenience. However, primary steps such as cutting and shredding papers are done in conventional ways. This particular type of production contains 16 to 17 types of seeds of different vegetables and flowers. While choosing the seeds to embed in these green papers, they keep two important things in mind. One, these seeds should easily be able to help in organic farming for sustainable agriculture. And two, ensuring that birds get enough food from the plants that grow from these seed papers.

### HOW PLANTABLE SEED PAPER WORKS

When the Bonkagoj is discarded and it comes in contact with damp soil and a suitable atmosphere, the seeds get activated and the seed paper starts to germinate within a few days. You can see sprouts coming out directly from the seed paper. But due to the seasonal changes and air masses, it may differ which seed bombs work. While discarding a Bonkagoj or seed paper, it is better to throw it out after tearing it into pieces on some damp soil. If you are fond of plants and want to do

something for nature, this is a good way to grow them in your balcony tubs or garden using these papers. However, this Bonkagoj has an expiry date which is very unlikely for normal papers. The reason is the seeds in Bonkaj have an average germination rate of 35% to 38% only for one year. After that the germination rate begins to fall, reducing the chances of the seed paper working.

Bonkagoj is thicker and pricier than any normal paper. However, they are now making a thinner version of this paper for writing purposes. An A4 size Bonkagoj weighing 70 to 100 GSM costs 20 Taka and a 15"x 8.5" Bonkagoj weighing 250 to 300 GSM costs 130 Taka. Prices mostly depend on their size and weight. Production of Bonkagoj notebooks is already underway. Sumon shared that Bonkagoj's price can be reduced in case they get the opportunity to produce them on a large scale. But the demand for such seed paper is very limited, much like their resources. "We are indebted to nature for every moment of our life. And if we are able to save this nature in any way, it'll be our pleasure. We are hopeful to be more efficient in producing such seed papers with a cheaper price and better quality overcoming the financial and other constraints that we are facing right now", said Sumon.



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

# TECH TRENDS TO GO GREEN:

## Sustainability initiatives that might just save the Earth

TAHSEEN NOWER PRACHI

April 22nd, celebrated worldwide as Earth Day, subtly reminds us that the world needs to change if it is to survive. The term 'Going Green' is not limited to only planting more trees anymore (though equally important), it also means there is now a greater push for sustainable technologies and products that will add to the prevailing ones. So, keeping Mother Earth in mind, innovators and businesses are stepping up to build a greener future. Here are some sustainable innovations and initiatives that can help,

### THE GREEN BUILDING INITIATIVE

The Green Building Initiative (GBI) is an international collective effort towards creating sustainable green buildings. Their program includes issuing LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification for commercial buildings adhering to their environment-friendly vision. The World Green Building Council estimates that about 39% of all carbon emissions root from buildings and construction sites. So, the Green Building Revolution that is taking place today throughout the world targets to minimise the harm by designing greener properties using eco-friendly building materials and better resources, generating less waste and carbon emission. The program checks seven categories before passing an LEED certificate. Today, over 2.2 million square footage of real estate becomes LEED-certified every day and their website lists almost 400 projects in Bangladesh with this certificate. Maximum of these projects

are RMG factories and Banks with some commercial workspaces. The progress in the RMG sector is laudable as the poor and unsafe safety measures in the garments have already battered our image in the international market.

### GREEN CARS

Green cars or vehicles are cars that produce less harmful impacts to the environment than comparable conventional internal combustion engine cars that run on gasoline or diesel. With some demerits, the cars that are designed to be ecologically more efficient than others come in types like Hybrids, Battery Electric Vehicles (BEV), Fuel Cell Vehicles (FCV). Hybrids pollute less than Gas cars, provide great range but with some emission. Toyota Aqua, Harrier, Camry Hybrid, Mitsubishi Outlander PHEV, Maruti Suzuki Ciaz and Ertiga are brand new hybrids (Except Aqua and Harrier) in Bangladesh with lots of others launched globally. Then there are BEV's that have no emission with limited range. There are around 5 pure EV Tesla cars altogether in Bangladesh of Model S, X and 3 with a few Porsche Taycan. Though FCV's are not in Bangladesh, those cars with zero-emission and great range that makes drinkable water are now slowly rising in the world market.

### AIRCARBON

AirCarbon is made from carbon emissions that would otherwise be released into the air. It was developed and introduced by Newlight Technologies and has won many

awards for its innovative sustainability. The Newlight Technologies demand that they use natural ocean microorganisms to make PHB from air and greenhouse gas and call it AirCarbon. AirCarbon is naturally meltable and not like other plastics that are made of oil. It can be melted and cooled into everything from fibre and sheet to solid parts and used to replace things like synthetic plastic and animal leather. It is a verified carbon-negative material ensuring one can go all green from its production to use.

### SOLAR GLASS

Solar panels to generate electricity have been introduced beforehand and it's been proven to be very effective as well. Now, the researchers at the University of Michigan are developing Solar Glass. As the name of this project implies, it would be able to capture and store solar energy like a solar panel. If the project is a success and ready to be handed down to mass consumers, we might be able to store sustainable energy in the glasses of our modern-day shiny glass-studded high-rise buildings!

### GROASIS WATERBOXX

Pieter Hoff, a Dutch flower exporter, created a planting device that can make the deserts green. The Groasis Waterboxx is a resource-efficient way that makes growing crops in the desert possible. It consists of an 'intelligent bucket' that is made of recycled paper, which can germinate seeds, incubate saplings, and water plants. This method requires almost 90% less water to grow crops than other

traditional methods. The most extreme climates on earth can use this process for cultivation. It can also be a ray of hope for the time when water scarcity finally comes to teach the wasters a lesson and dry the moist lands.

### SUPERMARKET HERB GARDENS

A quick peek at the popular MasterChef Canada's latest season's pantry, and you will see fresh herbs rising from little pots in the herb section. The Dutch supermarket chain 'Albert Heijin' introduced in-store herb gardens in 2017. The herbs are grown to maturity off-sight, before being transported to stores. Customers cut their required amount of fresh sprig and help cut down on plastic packaging. A simple but effective sustainable technology that can be very easily practised in Bangladeshi super shops and our homes as well.

### VEGANBOTTLE

The LYSPACKAGING company introduced the Veganbottle, a bottle made of all-natural bioplastic, as a tough competitor of non-biodegradable plastic bottles. Everything in the Veganbottle, from the cap to the wrapper with its name, is made of 100% biodegradable materials. The main raw material of this bottle is the extract of sugar canes. Sugar canes require far less water than other crops and the manufacturing cost is also lower than conventional ones. So, in a country like ours, where sugar canes are cultivated on a large scale, this technology can be very sustainable.

# Around the 64 Districts in 27 Days

AFNAN FARUK

Nafis Nayem Rafi and Alam Ashraf Sunny, two students of BUET, completed a cycling tour of all 64 districts after cycling for 2760 kilometres. Starting from Panchagarh, they cycled for a total of 178 hours. What started out as a crazy idea became a reality on the 22nd of February as the duo reached the final district, Cox's Bazar. Throughout the tour, they created awareness about plastic pollution with the motto 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.'

Alam Ashraf Sunny started cycling when he was a little kid. He would take out his grandfather's cycle every now and then and cycle around the neighbourhood. "Whenever I get a break, I try to go outside whether I have a cycle with me or not." Unlike Sunny, Nafis Nayem Rafi only started cycling 5 years ago. But he picked up really fast and went on his first cycling tour to Barisal in 2018. Both Sunny and Rafi have each gone to more than 15 cycling tours and cycled more than 5000 kilometres.

## INSPIRATIONS

The idea of cycling across the country hit Sunny when he was a little kid. He saw in one of Humayun Ahmed's dramas that an old man went on such a trip. "I could not believe something like this was possible. Then in 2019, I got to hear about Doctor Babor Ali who hiked across the whole country in 64 days. I hiked with him for 3 districts and that is when I started believing that I could do something like that someday."

## HOW IT STARTED

All of the cycling stopped when the pandemic hit. As people started sharing on social media about what they would like to do after the pandemic, Sunny posted that he would like to travel all 64 districts in his cycle after the lockdown. But it was still just an idea. He finally gathered the courage and reached out to some during the last week of 2020 to accompany him on this tour. Nafis Nayem Rafi responded. Unlike Sunny, "When Sunny reached out to me, I was sceptical at first. Although I eventually agreed, I told him that I might bail during the tour if it felt like too much pressure."

## PLANNING OF THE TOUR

Sunny and Rafi started planning 3-4 weeks before the tour. Sunny planned out the accommodations and Rafi decided on the details of the route. "We reached out to many of our friends living in different districts and they were more than happy to

provide us with accommodation." During the whole tour, we stayed at hotels in only 7-8 districts. The duo planned on cycling 110-130 kilometres everyday and tried to avoid cycling at night as much as possible.

## DESIGNING THE ROUTE

For the route, the duo took help from Babor Ali. They took Babor Ali's route plan and adjusted it. "We tried to take inner routes as much as possible since highways are not exactly designed for cycles and are accident prone. We also tried to take as many scenic routes as possible." The biggest challenge in designing the route plan was rivers. "We always heard that Bangladesh is a

Bazar." Most of the money was spent on food and accommodation. However, they spent much less than they expected. A significant portion of the money was actually spent on crossing rivers.

## BEST PART OF THE TOUR

"The best part will always be the people. We easily got attention because you don't usually see two persons like us cycling with so many things across highways." Both Rafi and Sunny stressed on how hospitable people were. "The most common question we were asked was what we were doing. To our surprise, the most common assumption was that we were from the army." Strangers invited

Dighalia - Kalia route. He also mentioned the Jibannagar - Chaugacha Road.

## WORST PART OF THE TOUR

"On 16th February, we lost much time of our day walking over the sand beds of Munshiganj. But we had to reach Cumilla that day. So, we had to cycle after sunset as well." While entering Daudkandi, Sunny had to stop because of a leakage in the tube. Two people came on motorbikes and took his phone and money. Rafi was only a hundred meters ahead but could not witness the incident.

## PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

The trip was an overwhelming experience for both Rafi and Sunny. It largely boosted their confidence that they can do something like this. Rafi plans on going on a trip along the hill tracts of Meghalaya next. On the other hand, Sunny wants to keep his plans undisclosed and prepare for them by himself.

## CYCLING IN BANGLADESH

Cycling tours in Bangladesh are gradually becoming more popular. Roads in general are not suitable for cycling in Bangladesh. "The most dangerous thing we faced was most of the highways did not have tarmacs on the sides. So, it was just deep sand when two lanes finished, and sand is very dangerous for cycling. Whenever a bus or truck overtook us, we always had to be prepared otherwise our tires would skid and result in accidents." The duo stressed on two things while planning for cycling tours: planning everything ahead of time and not cycling at night.



riverine country, but while designing the route we finally realised why they say that." Another challenge was finding accommodations.

## PACKING FOR THE TRIP

According to the duo, traveling light is the key to bicycle tours. The essentials to carry to any cycling tours are patch kits, extra tubes, repairing tools, pumpers, power banks, extra clothes, medicines, saline, button phones for emergency situations. Depending on the type of tour, sleeping bags, hammocks, and tents are necessary as well. The duo also took headlights and taillights for cycling after sunset if necessary.

## EXPENSES

"We spent about 9000tk per person and another 1500tk for sending our cycle to Panchagarh and getting it back from Cox's

them to their homes, local cycling groups arranged small seminars, and small shop owners did not take any money from them. "In 4 districts we stayed at absolutely strangers' homes. The most memorable one happened in Gopalganj. We came across Mr. Shafiquzzaman, who went on a similar trip back in the 90s and cycled across 30 districts without any navigation tools like Google Maps. He invited us to his house and served us cordially."

## FAVOURITE ROUTES

When asked about favourite routes, both of them responded with their preference towards routes of South Bengal. "The routes of South Bengal are much different from those of North Bengal." For Rafi, Bagerhat - Jhalokathi - Bogura route was the most fascinating. For Sunny, it was the



# 5 alternatives to make your home more ECO-FRIENDLY

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To deal with global climate change and its adverse effects, it is more crucial than ever to adopt eco-friendly options instead of regular wasteful ones. Individual's simple act in their daily life may not be a silver bullet, but these small steps will surely take us to our goal of zero waste as a whole. Here are 5 eco-friendly alternatives that you can opt for in your home.



## REPLACE TRADITIONAL LIGHT BULBS WITH LED LIGHTS

LED lights are far better lighting options than incandescent and other traditional lights as LEDs are more energy-efficient. It implies that they produce less carbon dioxide, a harmful product generated from electricity. For example, a 60-watt incandescent light bulb uses approximately 525 kilowatt-hours of energy annually, whereas a 60-watt LED bulb only uses 65 kilowatt-hours of energy. Another environment-friendly aspect of such lights is that they have high conversion efficiency, near 90% in most cases, which means a negligible heat loss in the environment. Besides, LEDs are free of toxic chemicals such as mercury and good for plants as they do not increase the temperature of a particular area like traditional bulbs. Unlike incandescent bulbs and CFLs, LED lights contribute significantly to reducing light pollution as well as your electricity bills.

## SET UP SMART PLUGS FOR LESS VAMPIRE ENERGY

Electronic devices such as TVs, laptops, microwaves, phone chargers, printers, and desktop computers use electricity even when they are on standby. It is very little in terms of the annual electricity use for each device. But when this minimal amount gets multiplied by several other products of households, it is no longer negligible at all. This standby or vampire energy is responsible for 1% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. To control such energy, smart plugs can come in handy. A smart plug is kind of a power-point adapter between the power socket and the appliances that are plugged in. It lets you control your appliances through any app suitable for this smart plug. You can switch off the connection of the appliances when you are going to sleep or about to leave the house. You can even schedule them to turn off automatically according to your convenience.

## USE WATER FILTERS THAN BOILING WATER

Pure water is a must for our survival. And to have clean water, you can choose to boil it on your gas stove or use a water filter in general. Boiling water on a gas stove requires a lot of natural gas, which is a non-renewable source of energy. This boiling process produces particulate pollutants in the environment and it is not a significantly efficient way to remove contaminants. On the other hand, water filters are way more reliable at purifying water. A high-quality water filter can do much more to ensure safe water than the boiling process does. As we have a habit of overfilling the kettle of water or overboiling, it wastes both energy and water in traditional boiling on a gas stove. Filtering is also faster compared to such a process. Consider Reverse Osmosis (RO) and UV water purifiers as alternatives against boiling.

## ECO-FRIENDLY PAINTS FOR A NON-TOXIC HOME

Most regular paints have a high level of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) that cause adverse effects on the environment as well as on human health. VOCs are responsible for causing unpleasant health conditions such as difficulty in breathing, skin irritation and allergy, nose and throat discomfort, etc. Moreover, these VOCs of traditional paints affect the air quality of your home by continuing to off-gas for many years. The waste of such paints is also detrimental to the environment that leaves a significant carbon footprint. Eco-friendly paints can be a considerable solution in such conditions, which are made of non-toxic and natural materials, and have low levels of VOCs and other harmful chemicals. These paints are a good alternative to clean up the indoor air quality of your home, keeping it free from toxic fumes.

## KITCHEN COMPOST BINS TO RECYCLE ORGANIC WASTE

Kitchen waste is a goldmine of various multivitamins which can support plant growth or improve soil productivity. Kitchen scraps such as potato peelings, used tea bags, banana peels or eggshells are full of nutrients needed to decompose properly to produce a useful organic material. Kitchen compost bin is a convenient indoor solution for that. Collect and compost your food waste in the compost bucket as per its capacity and recycle organic waste into nutrient-rich food for plants. Just make sure that you do not add fat or non-organic wastes in such an indoor compost bin. And the bin that you have selected has a proper lid to resist bad odour and air pollution.