

VOLUME 20, ISSUE 50, TUESDAY, JUNE 15, 2021
ASHAR 1, 1428 BS

Star

Life

E-mail: lifestyleds@yahoo.com
64-65 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1215. A publication of

Those RAINDROPS They keep *falling*

THE SEASON OF BOUNTIES
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THE DANGER LURING IN SHADOWS
MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE PANDEMIC P 4
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PHOTO: SAZZAD IBNE SAYED
MODEL: SIMMI
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Essentials for THE MONSOON SEASON

Monsoon is gradually arriving with its freshness and intermittent heavy rain showers. Weather during the rainy season can be pleasing, and tempt us to crawl further into the bed and relax. However, conducting daily tasks outside and navigating the streets during the monsoon can be tricky business, especially for city dwellers.

And this predicament calls for the need to tailor-fit on-the-go essentials for the whenever rain trouble.

Get protection from the rain

The best shields from heavy showers of the rainy season are an umbrella or a raincoat. But gone are the days when we had to opt for the types of raincoats that we knew of to be only plastic ponchos. Nowadays, there are many fashionable options available, such as foldable rain jackets as well as belted trench coats. And never forget to carry a compact and foldable umbrella as it will be a life-saver during the rainy season.

Be mindful of the footwear

During the rainy season, choose such footwear that is "easy to wear, easy to remove, and easy to dry." The best footwear options available during the monsoon are flip-flops, sandals and rubber or vinyl shoes. It is better to select shoes that are lightweight and offer maximum breathability as during the rainy season, closed shoes take more time to dry and may harbour germs around the feet.

Attires to make it through rains

Opting for quick dry clothing in the rainy season is a must as the weather during this time can be very unpredictable. Consider picking out your clothing depending on the activities that you have planned for the day ahead, and always remember to check the weather forecast. It will be wiser to go for clothes that can be worn under

the poncho or rain jacket such as shorts, cropped trousers, palazzos, blouses or tees.

Waterproof covers for gadgets

For the tech-obsessed generation, the principal accessory to have during the monsoon is a waterproof pouch or bag. A waterproof bag holds all your essential stuff safely and protects things from the heavy rain showers, especially important work files and other daily necessities. Moreover, there are also waterproof cases available for bigger gadgets such as laptops and reusable plastic bags can come in handy to carry additional items.

Remember the mosquito repellent

As flora and fauna bloom best during this time of the year, it also brings tonnes of mosquitos. Due to the heavy rain showers, damp weather and standing water, the mosquitoes can find plenty of opportunities and places to lay their eggs, such as gutters, buckets, planters, etc. Thus, carrying a good and strong insect repellent is a must in the monsoon. Always apply an effective brand to protect yourself from getting bitten.

No matter how pleasant the rainwater can sound, it also brings the pang of nostalgia and gloominess with it. And the days of pandemic quarantine have increased this melancholia, so do not resist the temptation of taking a casual evening stroll or evening walk during the monsoon. Moreover, the windy, cool atmosphere during the rainy season can be heartily enjoyed with hot beverages and snacks.

By Ayman Anika

Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad



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রূপচর্চায় আভিজাত্য...

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#FOOD

Exploring the world of EXOTIC FRUITS

Most people unfortunately fail to consume the two recommended servings of fruits a day. Even if your daily midday summer treat consists of your favourite fruit, rarely will that provide you with all the health benefits a balanced fruit intake has to offer. Thankfully, various online merchants are there to bring the world of exotic fruits to your doorstep, erasing monotony from daily servings.

The 'exotic' label

The term 'exotic' itself is up for debate amongst most fruit enthusiasts. While many of us would imagine fruits like durians or rambutans as 'exotic' due to their pungent smell or extra-terrestrial appearance, the term is often more inclusive than that. According to Taskin Rahman, the founder of The Food Talk, fruits which make their way to shops from other countries during typical Bangladeshi 'off-seasons' count as exotic as well.



You can find Australian mangoes online during winter. As soon as the Egyptian season for oranges ends, the one for South Africa begins. Online fruit shops usually play into the variation to supply a high number of common, yet exotic fruits all year round. If your tastebuds crave fruits such as these, you no longer have to spend months waiting.

As Abdullah Nihal Siddique, a fruit wholesaler put it, "There really is no 'off-season' for most common fruits anymore. Such markers do not exist at present as the fruits you typically associate with specific seasons are probably being brought in from one hemisphere or the other due to differences in seasonal variations worldwide."

Then there are fruits which are known to be both exclusive and exotic by those involved in the fruit business. Berries, dragon fruits, rambutan, and stone fruits like peaches, cherries, and apricots constitute this category. These fruits are usually shipped in smaller windows during certain times of the year, and are known to be region specific which helps them earn their 'exclusive' label.

From the Land Down Under

AL1F, an online shop based in Australia delivers fruits, meat, and dairy goods to Dhaka. They specialise in avocados, cherries, mangoes, and grapes. One of their big-ticket items are mangoes, sold online during Bangladeshi winters which spans the usual duration of the Australian mango season. Stone fruits such as cherries, apricots, nectarines and peaches



are popular on AL1F's Facebook page too, with cherries taking up the limelight. These stone fruits are also delivered during winter months.

One of the aspects customers love about online shops which sell fruits such as AL1F is their trademark freshness.

"We operate on pre-orders, and usually ship on a weekly or fortnightly basis depending on the demand and season.



The fruits are shipped off by air the same day they are bought. The produce arrives in Bangladesh the next day, and is promptly delivered. I believe that building strong relationships with customers is crucial, and selling fresh, preservative-free fruits is vital for establishing their trust.

I aspire to be a merchant with a strong relationship with customers rather than a mere seller," remarked Jamil, the CEO of AL1F.

And the Land of Smiles

Thai fruits are also loved by locals. Dragon fruits are almost synonymous with a Bangladeshi's definition of an exotic fruit, and one of the most popular. Thailand has a lot more to offer besides dragon fruit, be it heavily odorous durians, musky yet sweet longans, or the alien-like rambutan. If you want to get adventurous with your fruit cravings, Fruit BD and Royal Fruitz are your perfect online portals for Thai fruits.

Berries Galore

Most online fruit sellers usually have inclusions of berries in their collection. These tiny powerhouses hold significant amounts of antioxidants, anti-inflammatory ingredients, and fibre. If you are a desert enthusiast, they can make a wonderful addition to your pantry. Blueberries and blackberries, along with the faux members of the family — strawberries, are scrumptious additions to a plethora of sweets and baked goods.

Although exotic fruits can be slightly pricier than local ones, they are the perfect way to incorporate more fruits into your diet. They open up an immense number of options, catering to all types of taste buds while also ensuring freshness. Your body will thank you as well if you add more variety as it will ensure that you get the right mix of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and fibre.

Essentials —

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<https://www.facebook.com/groups/thefoodtalk>

By Tasfia Ahmed
Photo Courtesy: AL1F



MANGOES

A love for the ages

The only reason you are not rioting about this sweltering summer heat is because it coincides with the season of the 'King of fruits,' Mangoes. Auspicious, fragrant, juicy, pulpy, having mangoes is nearly therapeutic. Sour or sweet, ripe or unripe, mangoes in any form never fails to hit your taste bud right.

All of us have our most preferred way of eating mangoes. You can slice them up and eat the pulp. Or you can just peel off the skin and start devouring like you never had. Get your arms sticky and your clothes stained. Make a mess. Because for me, that's the right way of doing justice to this unparalleled gift of God.

From morning milkshake to kissing goodnight to the mango ice-cream, mango covers it all. You sigh in bliss. The ease with which mangoes lend themselves to versatile recipes sets your every mood



right. Mango is as refreshing in a drink as it is in a tangy pickle and chutney.

Mangoes has a significant place in the kitchen too. Apart from sauces, chutneys and pickles, mango sabzi and salsa dip with mangoes are some must do.

Beat the heat with mangoes. Add sour mangoes to your dal couple with fluffy white rice, a concoction that can never go wrong. Make yourself a mango lassi, perfect for hot summer days.

Chapainawabganj, one of the leading mangoes producing districts, is in lockdown amid the upsurge in Covid-19 infections in the district. But even when everything is shut and the sun hurts, 'Special Mango Train' is delivering mangoes to Dhaka all the way from Rajshahi and Chapainawabganj.

Usually at midnight when the country is sleeping, the train reaches Dhaka and the station comes alive and buzzing with people. The stations get filled with the aromas and all you see are tonnes of mangoes. So, the mango in your hand is a treasure of memories and emotions.

It indeed is rightfully called the 'King of fruits' and has found a special place in poetry, literature, history, culture and cuisine. From cuisine to ceremonies, mangoes are an inseparable part of the Bengali culture.

By Tahmid Azad Sohan
Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad

INTERPRETER OF MALADIES

NIGHAT ARA
Psychiatrist, Counsellor,
and Therapist



Hypochondriac and OCD during the pandemic

The pandemic has significantly impacted overall mental health of the general population. Extent and severity of symptoms would vary from person to person, depending on the balance between adversities of life and available resources to cope with it. The human mind, body and brain carry the scar of living with a chronic life — threatening situation long after it comes to an end. Even though “we are all in it together in this pandemic” is a far better experience than trauma that happens in isolation, it can still be the “last straw that breaks the camel’s back” for someone whose mental health was already at compromised level.

An upsurge of mental health conditions like OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder) and Somatization (e.g., Musculo-skeletal pains, fatigue etc.) have been reported across the world since the pandemic started. Unproductive obsessive thoughts (a personality trait) that go unhinged can eventually render someone very helpless.

Biologically, this indicates malfunction of certain neuronal circuits of brain which involves brain structures like — thalamus (receives all sensory input from surroundings), amygdala (flags the danger), prefrontal cortex (regulate response to perceived danger). Parts of our brain (e.g., hippocampus) store memories of previous life-threatening experiences to ensure much quicker reflex action (first line of defense) bypassing the rational cortical brain areas (higher brain centres), which takes longer to assess and contextualise the danger to execute proportionate response.

Pandemic related threats to life can activate human Autonomic Nervous System (ANS has sympathetic and parasympathetic division) to recruit emergency defense mechanism of the body. Cry for help (social engagement system controlled by Ventral Vagal branch of Parasympathetic NS) as

our first line of defense may go unheeded. Sympathetic NS (fight and flight response) to ensure survival then comes into play.

Overuse of sympathetic system leads to exhaustion of stress axis of the body. This can cause fatigue and PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) symptoms like hypervigilance, startle response, etc. If Dorsal Vagal branch of Parasympathetic NS (freeze or faint response) gets involved, this may lead to complete collapse (bed ridden, immobile) or dissociative (numb, disconnected, out of body experience etc.) symptoms.

According to polyvagal theory, ANS system plays an important role in all life-

This biological snapshot is important to understand how different people can respond to the same traumatic event in very different ways. Our brain is a social organ. Its function changes remarkably after traumatic experience, which then manifests in emotions, thoughts and behaviours. Fear signal helplessness and alerts us to danger. The fundamental purpose of emotion is to initiate movement that will restore the organism to safety and physical equilibrium. Obsessive compulsive disorder could be one kind of traumatised brain response. From a psychological perspective, repetitive unproductive thoughts are triggered by trapped

In addition to pharmacological support to reduce obsessive thinking and somatic symptoms (antidepressant and anti-anxiety medications are effective in most cases), cognitive behaviour therapy (to engage rational brain), safe social interactions and human connections (to engage Ventral Vagal NS) and somatomotor therapies (to engage body parts that holds the nervous energy of unresolved trauma experiences) are very important components of a comprehensive treatment model.

Safe friendly human interactions, rhythmic body movements (e.g., namaz and zikr, yoga, dance, walks etc.) can help to restore some balance in ANS. Engaging sensory system of our body (pain, touch, temperature etc.) with music or recitation (soothing sound), visual art (colours and texture) can also help to put a brake to body memories. Breathing and mindfulness exercises are very important to stay in the moment and prevent the past from hijacking our brain. These are priceless easy ways to heal the mind, body and soul.

Mental health of children and youth deserve the highest attention for the sake of a healthy future generation. Children/youth need safe human connection (classrooms and playgrounds) to interact with peers to regulate their emotions. This also facilitates healthy social development. If those psychological growth milestones are missed, it will leave a long-term mark in the mental health of this whole generation. The World Health Organization has already given warnings about mental health epidemic at the end of this pandemic. Health departments are supposed to be taking appropriate measures to prevent this projected epidemic with available resources. Governments of developed countries are already taking essential measures to prevent any avalanche of mental health of their respective population.

Obsessive thoughts can lead to compulsive behaviours to secure a sense of control and thereby, letting go of some of the suppressed energies floating inside.

threatening situations. Vagus Nerve (10th cranial nerve) is pivotal to understand aftermath of trauma and how life can change after this.

On the other hand-prolonged activation of DV (dorsal vagal branch) can lead to infra diaphragmatic (partition between chest cavity and abdominal cavity organs like stomach, kidney, liver etc.) related visceral symptoms. These are physiologically mediated psychological symptoms which eventually can become fatal. People reporting somatic symptoms (commonly called hypochondriacs) are often found to be carrying trauma memories in the ANS (unconscious body memories).

emotional energy (anger, fear, etc.) that was generated during trauma experience which could not be thwarted in the moment by taking biologically programmed actions of survival (e.g., running away from the source of danger or physically fighting back etc.). Obsessive thoughts can lead to compulsive behaviours (e.g., excessive hand washing, excessive sanitisation, checking etc.) to secure a sense of control and thereby, letting go of some of the suppressed energies floating inside (an analogy — releasing the pressure by opening the pressure cooker valve). Thus, OCD is a coping mechanism that eventually becomes a mental disorder.

◆ HOROSCOPE ◆



ARIES (MAR. 21-APR. 20)

Changes could be overwhelming. Don't be overbearing. Let them do their own thing. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



TAURUS (APR. 21-MAY 21)

Expect to face opposition at home. Concentrate on your job. Keep personal affairs private. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



GEMINI (MAY 22-JUN. 21)

Don't be overdramatic. Avoid fraternising with co-workers too much. Your partner may not be happy with you. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



CANCER (JUN. 22-JUL. 22)

Do proper research before starting something. Romance is likely this week. Older family members can be demanding. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



LEO (JUL. 23-AUG. 22)

Your reputation will be affected. Spend time in company of loved ones. Unexpected bills may be upsetting. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 23)

Go over your plans. Keep your opinions to yourself. Don't be too harsh with loved ones. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



LIBRA (SEP. 24-OCT. 23)

Concentrate on your business ventures. Opportunities for romance will develop through group activities. Friendships will face unexpected changes. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



SCORPIO (OCT. 24-NOV. 21)

Your partner will be on edge. Don't blow situations out of proportion. Strengthen your position among peers. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

Beware of some people. You will attract new lovers this week. Opportunities in investment groups will pay off. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 20)

Family members may need assistance. Be careful at work. Don't let anyone take advantage of you. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



AQUARIUS (JAN. 21-FEB. 19)

You will be quite excitable this week. Look for something entertaining. Don't make promises. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



PISCES (FEB. 20-MAR. 20)

Take a break sometimes. Don't overspend on luxuries. Rewards for past good deeds will be fulfilling. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



#TECH

Do you have a VISION?

Nobody watches TV anymore — surely, you've heard that a thousand times in the last few years. Perhaps because there are too many options these days or perhaps, they mean they don't watch any particular show, but let's face it, every house needs a TV.

Even if you want to play a game of bridge with your friends, it's a good idea to have a TV playing in the background. And did we mention that the Euro has started? Whatever your reason is, whether to watch the thrilling games of Group F (Germany, France, Portugal and Hungary) or to watch the latest episodes of Lucifer on Netflix, you need a good TV. And in these modern times, an Android TV is the way to go. VISION introduced the google authorized Android TV in the market as a first Bangladeshi brand. Take the G3S Galaxy for example. It comes in three different sizes — 43", 50", and 55" with a 4K display. It runs on Android 10 (Official) and comes with Google Assistant as AI. The Bezel-less ultra slim design will fit with any sort of interior you might have at your abode. Install it considering the lighting and the entrance of your room and you can enjoy the magnificent screen for your TV needs or resort to your binge-watching journey. Even in a large room, you should have no trouble with the sound system since the G3S Galaxy comes with a pair of 10-watt speakers featuring Dolby Digital Surround Sound system. If you are not satisfied with what Netflix has to offer, you can always connect your flash drive and play your favourite movie for the



umpteenth time (because why not?). The G3S Galaxy supports USB and HDMI for such an occasion and with 1 billion (10 bit) colours, you are going to have a blast. 43", 50" and 55" is for customers living room & they can choose 32" for their bedroom. With Official Android 9.0 as their operating system, both of these products offer Authorised Netflix which should be of good use for binge watching those shows that you've been meaning to catch up on. You could use Google Chromecast to cast your mobile or laptop on the big screen to show off your favourite music video or if you want, the option of USB and HDMI is also available in these products. To add

to that, both M03 and E10 supports LAN. Just picture it, how amazing it would be to watch Justice League Snyder Cut on a screen that supports 16.7 million (8 bit) colours. And combine that with Dolby Digital Surround sound system — if that's not worth staying in on a Thursday night then what is? The M03 and E10 also offers Earphone and Optical audio out facility. And did we mention that these are voice-controlled TV with Google Assistant? Running on Android, of course, all of the TVs come with Google Play Store. Which means you can download any app that you like and run it on your TV. The G3S Galaxy comes with 2GB of RAM and 8GB ROM. The M03 and E10 offers 1GB RAM and 8GB ROM; which should be enough for your everyday needs. All of the Android TVs will have a warranty of four years so you shouldn't have to worry. Wall mounting, Surge Protector, and Base Stand will be included in the package so you can install your TV wherever it is most convenient for you. The only question is — are you going to have a VISION? For more information, visit their website: <https://www.vision.com.bd> By Ashif Ahmed Rudro Photo: VISION



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Every year when this particular season comes up, my emotions begin to overflow. I feel like I am a much nicer person during the days of the incessant rain and colourful rainbows. However, the moniker Fashion Police may give out a completely different vibe. People predict that someone with such a fastidious name is sure to fall in love with sunny days, happening nights, fashion and an overdose of glitz and glamour. On the contrary, actually!

Heal the world with MONSOON



To those who believe monsoon is for the dull and colourless, let me rectify the statement. It is indeed for the spontaneous and the most fashionable.

Why? Here's the fun part:

PLUSH GREENERY AND EVENING WALKS

Ever strolled in and around lush green avenues during the pleasant season? Every colour set on our beautiful blue planet becomes brighter and luxurious. This is the perfect time to take a solitary walk or a stroll with the significant other around the lush greenery; midmorning or even in the early evenings.

FOOTLOOSE

No, not the movie! For me personally, it is customary to dance in the rain. If you are lucky enough to have an open veranda or maybe the rooftop, get up there and let your body move with the flow. Just remember one thing; you are never ever too old to dance in the rain.

PICTURES PLEASE

The entire world is obsessed with taking pictures, from amateur smartphone photographers like myself to professionals with a verified social media page. And nothing can beat the luscious pictures that come out in this particular season. Everything around is much brighter,

the shades more impressive and the overall ambience – hard to describe in mere words.

CREATIVE AND BRAVE

Monsoon is the perfect time to let the creative side in you finally take the lead! You know the painting you have been putting aside for the longest time, or the poem you have been meaning to write all this while. It is right about time to give a nudge to the creative living inside you. Let yourself loose, enjoy the rain and let the creativity flow along with the drops.

Thank me later!

By Fashion Police





Mango mania

Summers are synonymous with the mango season that most foodies await with a lot of enthusiasm. The sweet, pulpy fruit which comes in many varieties can be enjoyed as it is, or added to enhance many dishes and desserts. Here are some more ways to enjoy the goodness of mangoes this summer. Try these, I am sure you will love them!



MANGO CREPE

Mango crepe is a pancake using fresh mango purée topped with fluffy whipped cream and mango chunks, wrapped with a thin, moist crepe. A pillow-shaped creamy dessert to die for.

Ingredients

1 cup whole milk
¼ cup mango purée
1/3 cup all-purpose flour
¼ cup corn starch
¼ cup icing sugar
3 eggs, beaten
2 tsp melted butter
1 cup fluffy whipped cream
2 mangoes, peeled and cut into chunks

Method

In a large mixing bowl, mix flour, starch, icing sugar, and whisk until well combined. Add beaten eggs, milk, mango purée, melted butter and mix well. Heat up a non-stick frying pan over low heat. Pour a small amount of batter onto the pan then

swirl quickly to form a very thin disk. When small air pockets appear under the pancake, remove and place it on a plate to cool. Repeat the procedure with the rest of the mixture.

Lay one pancake, spoon some whipped cream onto the middle of it and place one piece of mango chunk on top. Wrap the filling from four sides of the pancake to form a pillow-like shape with the folded side facing down. Refrigerate them for 30 minutes before serving and will look better when cut through.

MANGO FIZZ

Fresh and zingy, this sparkling mango lemonade with hints of mint will have you looking forward to the hotter summer days.

Ingredients

4 lemons – thinly sliced
2 cups mango purée
1 cup lemonade (using fresh lemons, sugar, salt, and water)
1 cup club soda water



1 cup sprite
½ cup mint leaves
Lots of ice to serve

Method

Take 4 serving glasses, put sliced lemon and mint leaves. Add 3-4 ice cubes. Pour half cup of mango purée into a glass. Pour soda water, lemonade and sprite equally. Or everything can be mixed in a big jar or pitcher and then served chilled.

MANGO MATCHA CHIA PUDDING

A healthy, super quick and easy to make breakfast or anytime summer snack that is filled with delicious flavours.

Ingredients

4 tbsp chia seeds
¼ tsp matcha powder
1 tsp honey
1 large mango – peeled and diced
1 and ½ cup coconut milk or any milk
Coconut flakes, mint leaves and chia seeds for topping



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Method

In a medium size bowl, mix chia seeds, matcha, milk and honey and leave the mixture about 1 hr more to expand the chia seeds. Once the seeds have expanded completely, transfer half of the mixture into 3 serving bowls. Fill the bowls halfway through and add chopped mango about 2-3 tbsp then add the chia mixture layer again till top. Finally, again add a few chopped mangoes and mint leaves. Sprinkle with coconut flakes and chia seeds. Serve immediately or store in the fridge for 2-3 hrs.

FRANGIPANI MANGO

Flower shaped cookies that are made with fresh mango purée to munch at any time or to serve at your fancy, High-Tea time.

Ingredients

- 1½ cup all-purpose flour
- ½ cup mango purée
- ½ cup caster or powder sugar
- 1/3 cup cold butter
- 1 tsp baking soda
- Pinch of salt

Method

In a large bowl, whisk the butter with sugar until the consistency becomes creamy. Add mango purée and mix again gently and thoroughly. In a separate bowl, add flour,

salt and baking soda and mix well. Add flour mixture little by little to the mango mixture and whisk gently. Repeat mixing until all the flour mixture gets finished. Cover the dough with a lid and let rest in the fridge for ½ an hr.

Roll the dough onto your kitchen top thinly. Use a small size round cookie cutter to cut flower petals. Keep and line 5 circles up, overlapping each one about 1/3. Gently press the overlap together with your fingertip and roll the circles together to give a flower shape. Adjust all petals. Take a baking tray and place a parchment paper and place all the flowers. Bake in a preheated oven at 175 degree Celsius for about 15-20 minutes. Let all cookies come at room temperature then store in your cookie tin.

MANGO MOUSSE CHOCOLATE BAR

Ingredients

- ½ cup fresh mango purée
- 1 cup chilled heavy whipping cream (for mousse)
- 2 tsp agar powder
- 2 tbsp water
- Pinch of cardamom powder or any essence
- Pinch of saffron (optional)
- 125g chocolate bar
- ¼ cup heavy whipping cream (for chocolate ganache)
- Mango chunks for garnish

Method

Whip 1 cup chilled heavy cream until soft peaks then keep into the fridge. Take a separate bowl, dilute agar powder with

water, mix it with a spoon and let sit for a minute. Heat a sauce pan on medium-low flame with mango purée and agar water. Stir occasionally add in any flavouring at this point such as cardamom and saffron. Let the mixture come to a simmer. Once that agar has dissolved completely turn off the heat and cool the mixture to come to room temperature. Take out the whipped cream from the fridge and add mango agar mixture to it and beat it immediately to make a smooth mousse. Keep it in the fridge once again.

In a double boiler, melt your chocolate at low flame, turn off heat and add heavy whipping cream, mix together to get a smooth silky chocolate ganache. Put some cupcake liner to your cupcake tray. Fill the cupcake liner 1/3 with chocolate ganache then pour mouse layer and then again chocolate layer if you wish, till top. Chill immediately for at least 4-6 hr. Garnish with grated chocolate or anything as you like.



Those were the Days...

For over a year, and since the pandemic was with us, I started writing a diary of my days in quarantine. Looking back at what I wrote a couple of days back, I thought: why not share a few of the thoughts that came to me over the year in a concise way with Star Lifestyle readers?

The initial consequences of the pandemic were truly devastating — one after another, people I was fond of and admired were dying after being infected with COVID. Most depressing for me was the passing away of Sunbeams School's Mrs Niloufer Manzur, my mentor and 'Apa' whom I admired so, and depended upon, in all kinds of ways. I was initially thunderstruck for we had lost our guardian. Soon, condolences poured in from everywhere and I felt I could share my grief with everyone else who was mourning. Soon other people I knew or admired like Professor Anisuzzaman passed away, leaving the nation in mourning.

But there were some cases where we were relieved because COVID could not do its worst. My dear friend, F, for instance, had to struggle for a couple of weeks in a hospital ICU, but the good thing is she has come back to us.

To go back to the first phase of the pandemic though, I remember vividly the plight of poor people in Dhaka after the government had declared a lockdown. Soon, many of them would flock outside

our apartment building night and day, crying for food. There were day laborers and suddenly unemployed household help among them. My maid and I did our best to supply them with food, as did our neighbours. But they were so many of them and their moaning was so hard to bear. I remembered then of what my mother had said about her experience of the 1943 famine—of people begging for food or dying on the streets.

Then, all of a sudden, and around Eid-ul-Fitr, they disappeared, probably going back to their village homes. And suddenly, the streets seemed strangely empty for a while. On television, there were initially images of mass graves being dug all over the world and reports of daily fatalities from the deadly COVID became something we had to read obsessively. Although we were among the few people in our apartment building who still read the newspaper in print, I soon began losing interest in it. Even social media seemed to have nothing interesting to offer. The medical columns in newspapers carried reports on depression; social distancing had affected us all.

However, the lockdown was lifted after a while and things eventually started to come back to some kind of normalcy. Many people who had left the city returned to it. Most people were now wearing masks. At first, they and the world looked very



strange as I looked out from my balcony. At one point, the government and our resilient people fought back. Even when we had flash flood, I could see from TV that rural folks striving to start again.

With things improving, my colleagues and I were taking online classes for our students — a new experience for so many of us. Initially, at the end of the class, I would feel a little spaced out. "Poor little ones" I used to think at first. But gradually, they learnt to concentrate on what we would be saying.

But another March has gone, and the

pandemic has hit us badly again. When really unhappy with everything, I kept thinking of the opening lines from Mary Hopkins' song that I first heard in my teens decades ago but that still is part of me... "Those were the days, we thought they would never end..." But here we were, in the midst of the pandemic, and the good days seem to have gone out of our sight for all of us — teachers and little ones — forever.

By Nazma Alam
Photo: Collected

#REVIEWS

Pen palling in 2021

I first came across the word pen pal when I was a student of 4th grade. There was a very clichéd letter in the syllabus which was about describing your country to a foreign pen friend. I didn't just get through the letter like every other one but rather marvelled at it because the idea of writing to some foreigner was very exciting back then. But I always wondered where people would find such friends. As I grew up and the Internet became part and parcel of our lives, I found out that it's quite easy to make pen pals abroad.

GLOBAL PENFRIENDS

This is arguably the best pen palling website available online. It's very easy to create an account as you just need to have an email to register and it's searching parameters ensures you get to meet people of your appropriate requirement (like country, spoken language, subjects of interest), the extreme vetting policy before approving an account ensures the fact that there happens to be no scam accounts. The only drawback is you have two contact credits when you are using it for free and you have to pay a few dollars to increase the number of contact credits. Overall, I personally have met a few very fantastic people through this website and would definitely suggest others to use it.



PEN PAL WORLD

This is another popular pen palling website available. Some of its unique features include keeping a very concise introduction and a single profile picture. Other than this, being a non-paying member, you are allowed to send three messages per day, and you can send messages to the paying members as well, the feature which global penfriends lacked. However, its biggest

drawback is that you can get inappropriate messages from scam accounts. However, you can easily block them as the feature of the website allows you to.

MY LANGUAGE EXCHANGE

This is not a pen palling website in the literal sense of the term but it comes close. It's basically full of geeky people who are wishing to get a grip in a foreign language. However, if this is what you want,

the website is definitely for you. You can connect with other people through text chat, voice chat or email, a few features which are totally exclusive to this website. It's basically duo lingo but with people so it doesn't have any serious drawback.

INTERPALS

This is one of the oldest pen palling communities available online so you would be able to find a lot of people there with an option to email or snail mail them. However, this website is getting its fair share of negative reviews in recent times due to the authorities' indifference to scammers and the abundance of scam profiles in the community. However, you can always block an account if there is a red flag.

PENPALAND

This is one of the newest pen palling communities out there, with only a few members (3000 currently), but it has a great bunch of people. The search feature is very quirky as it gives you two options, "Find a friend" and "Find friend from travel destination." So, if you are planning to travel to some country to spend a year or two, this website can be really instrumental in finding you potential mates from the place.

By Rassiqa Aziz Kabir
Photo: Collected

LIFE AS IT IS

WARA KARIM

Writer, painter, gardener, content creator
Website: <http://www.scratchingout.com>



Tomorrow, a 3D film by Bangladeshi animators

Ratul Hasan, 6, lives on St. Martin's Island, the southernmost point of Bangladesh. On a nighttime magical journey with "the Old Man of the Winds," Ratul sees two kinds of possible future for his country and the world — one bleak and one bright.

In the bleak future, he sees lands inundated by rising waters, displaced people migrating to the north of the country for refuge, widespread poverty, crowded cities, and illnesses caused by pollution.

The bright future shows a prosperous Bangladesh, where imposition of additional taxes on fossil fuels (natural gas, coal, oil) and subsidies for renewable energy sources (solar panels, windmills) have created new jobs and made the country green and livable once again.



after it was released on 17 May. I enjoyed it so much that I later watched the Bengali version, too.

Once you start watching Tomorrow, your mind wonders if it was really made in Bangladesh; Tomorrow has scaled the heights of animation in the country.

In a conversation with Tomorrow's director Shihab Uddin, who also directed 'Shahana,' the animated series produced by UNFPA, and worked as a production manager on four episodes of UNICEF's beloved Meena cartoon. I asked him how challenging it was to make a three-dimensional animated film in the Bangladeshi setting.

"It was challenging every step of the way! Although Tomorrow was initially set to be a two-dimensional film, I took up the challenge to make it a three-dimensional one with the look and feel of a feature film. Thanks to Cycore Studios, the largest animation studio in Bangladesh, and their extremely talented animators," he said.

In a world where people are used to watching high-grade Pixar-Disney animated films, if your 3D film does not

'cut the mustard,' it can be easily rejected by the audience. Keeping this truth in mind, Shihab Uddin and his team at Cycore Studios toiled until they were satisfied with the end results, making every bit of the film as realistic as possible. It took them two years to make the film and another one-and-a-half year earlier to develop the script.

"We paid attention to every little detail, from hair blowing in the wind, clothes of the characters, sea waves crashing onto the shore to trees, branches, mountains, bird's-eye view of Dhaka City, the United Nations room, everything," Shihab Uddin said.

"Tomorrow had a huge number of sets or locations. Each location was different from the other, which meant that it was challenging for us to maintain consistency throughout the film. However, we never thought of giving up, we did not compromise with one single shot," he added.

Produced on a budget of Tk 10 million, Tomorrow was made over a span of two years on one of the most pressing issues of today, climate change. Even though Bangladesh is exceptionally vulnerable to

climate crisis, as many environmentalists call it today, there is lack of awareness about it amongst general Bangladeshis.

The film educates through Ratul what we should do today to save our tomorrow. Ratul, upon learning about climate change and global warming during his magical journey, embarks on a climate action movement in Bangladesh that later spreads around the world, distinguishing Bangladesh as a climate champion on the global stage. The film ends with Ratul delivering a speech at the United Nations 25 years later.

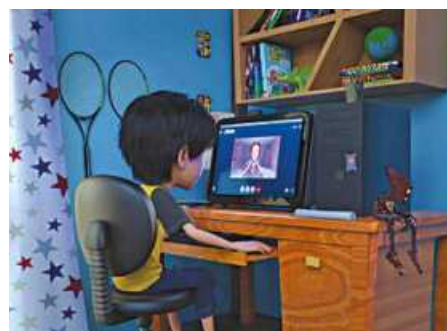
The message rendered by Tomorrow is reaching far and wide, garnering praises and admiration. Upon the request of viewers, the film was dubbed into English and released on Deepto TV's YouTube channel on 17 May.

"In the coming days, the film will be released in other major languages, including French, Indonesian, Dutch, Arabic, Spanish, and Urdu," Shihab Uddin said.

Asked how bright he thinks the future for Bangladeshi animators is, Shihab Uddin said, "People from home and abroad are applauding the team and Tomorrow for the work we did and the standard we achieved with limited experience and resources. If we can make 4 or 5 short films like Tomorrow, we never have to look back again. If we can get some support from the government, and if some good producers come forward, then I think Bangladesh can make a mark in the world of animation!"

Before we wrap this piece up, a math problem for our readers to solve: For the film Tomorrow, Cycore Studios needed to render 24 frames per second and it took approximately 30 minutes to create just one frame. How many frames were rendered in total for a film whose duration is 25 minutes 51 seconds?

Photo: Wara Karim



'Tomorrow' is a 26-minute 3D animated film on climate change directed by Mohammad Shihab Uddin and produced by the entrepreneur-climate activist duo Kazi Zahin Hasan and Kazi Zeeshan Hasan of Kazi Farms Group. Tomorrow was released on Deepto TV's YouTube channel on 21 December, 2019, and has been viewed more than 1.2 million times at the time this was written.

The film has recently been dubbed into English to reach the global audience. I watched the English version of Tomorrow

#BEAUTY

Win against acne

At some point in our lives, we all had entertained the idea that once we get through our adolescent years, the painful pimples will leave us alone. Sadly, we could not have been more wrong and are still trying to figure out the best way around this problem.

So, here are a few simple and easy, yet effective steps that can help you prevent common adult acne.

Double-cleansing

Divide and conquer! Double cleansing quite literally translates to washing your face with two cleansers, an oil-based one followed by a water-based cleanser. The only thing to remember is that this sequence has to be maintained.

An oil-based cleanser on your already-oily skin may seem like a strange idea at first, but hear us out. According to dermatologists and makeup experts, oil-based cleanser attracts the excess oil, makeup, and any dirt residue from the face, making it easier to get rid of them without stripping the skin off of its moisture.

When you follow this up with a

water-based cleanser, which is just your regular face wash, it helps to lift the impurities more easily, giving our skin a thorough clean up.

Salicylic acid

Cleansers, toners, or moisturisers containing salicylic acid are often seen as a one-stop solution to common acne problems. This acid works into the skin, helping to dissolve the dead skin cells and clearing out the pores. It can also prevent future breakouts.

Exfoliation

Exfoliating gently once or twice a week helps to remove the dead and dull skin cells while unclogging the pores. The best part is your skin starts to look and feel healthy almost immediately.



You can invest on a good face scrub suitable for your skin type, a popular choice these days are enzyme scrubs. Among homemade scrubs, oatmeal is incredibly effective on the skin without being too harsh.

One thing to avoid in a scrub is something with too many micro beads. A scrub with a grainy texture often leads to micro tears in our skin which are undetectable to bare eyes.



Clean products

Perhaps one of the most important factors for maintaining good skin hygiene is cleaning the things that come into contact with your face

regularly. Dermatologists recommend washing makeup brushes a few times in a month, depending on how frequently they are used.

Dirty hair and greasy scalp can also cause breakouts. Almost all of us follow a weekly shampoo schedule. However, if your hair starts to feel greasy before the routine wash, do not think twice before washing it off.

Our smartphone screens often consist of bacteria, including the type that cause acne. Ideally, it is recommended that we clean it every day.

All things said and done, we have to remember that our skin is affected by factors beyond our control, such as mental stress, physical stress, hormonal changes, or even weather changes. As hard as it may be, try not to touch or poke the pimple. Instead, you can turn to acne patches for help.

By Nusrath Jahan

Photo: LS Archive/Sazzad

