

Frugal living during the pandemic

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Many do not know this, but most super shops charge a premium for groceries and proteins compared to shopping directly at kitchen markets, and in a pandemic, every little bit counts.

Saadi, a newly married 36-year-old working for a private firm, went through a similar routine of cancellations and evaluations. “This pandemic made me realise how many unnecessary expenses were eating away at my pay check. After axing those, I also discovered that on top of shopping for groceries, I had a habit of buying things that made no sense in an uncertain time like this, such as buying mountains of crisps, chocolates and so on. We also realised that by skipping takeaway meals and only consuming home-cooked meals, our monthly expenses dropped significantly. We have now opened a joint-savings account and saving our leftover earnings for emergencies,” remarked Saadi. On top of just curbing unnecessary costs and re-evaluating spending, doing groceries also became a tricky venture, because when every taka matters, you want to avoid overpaying as much as possible. Many do not



into a frugal spending budget. Naima, a 31-year-old working for a private television company, had to deal with just such a reality, saying, “After a month or so of lockdowns, me and some of my colleagues had our monthly salaries cut nearly in half. This put a huge strain on me, a single woman living with my parents in Dhaka. I actually had to limit my usual grocery shopping and buy enough to make one type of food for a week, before shopping again.” An ever-harsher reality was for those who were eventually laid off by their respective organisations. Shaffat faced just such a reality. A 48-year-old father of two, who worked for a newspaper for over 20 years, was let go at the height of a raging pandemic. “No words can describe how betrayed

Pay cuts is another serious hurdle that many needed to tackle and integrate into a frugal spending budget.

and heartbroken I felt. I didn’t have that long before retirement. If I didn’t have a saving, I could have ended up on the street,” stated Shaffat. Safe to say many others were on the same boat as Shaffat, but minus any kind of savings. **Now and forever** Things started to stabilise slowly after mass vaccinations were enabled and lockdowns were withdrawn, allowing daily wage earners to return and start work. As for the upper- and middle-class workforce, regular work resumed, to try and steer out of this battered economy. However, it will be some time before things slowly start returning to some form of equilibrium, because the fight is still not over, especially if you consider current events.

Our country is currently being rocked by yet another variant, named Omicron, and infection rates are high again, putting many recovery plans in jeopardy. Until that day comes, and it will be a while, the frugal living practise should not be forsaken at any cost. Once things do settle down, and we arrive at a new post-pandemic era, we can take all the lessons that we have learned during the pandemic about calculative and frugal living, and apply it there, because if there was one lesson we need to take into heart, it is that maintaining a saving is more important than it ever will be and these couple of years will serve as that reminder. **By Intisab Shahriyar**
Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed

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31ST ANNIVERSARY OF

The Daily Star