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# WOMANHOOD *accomplished*

MENTAL HEALTH  
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SIBLINGS PASSION FOR COOKING  
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PHOTO: SAZZAD IBNE SAYED  
MODEL: MUBASHSHIRA KAMAL ERA  
STYLING: ISHA YEASMIN  
MAKE-UP: SUMON RAHAT

চারিদিক উজ্জ্বল  
বাড়ি হবে বলমল



সুপার গ্লসি লুক



পানি ও আগুন প্রতিরোধক





**MIND MATTERS****SRABONTI NARMEEN ALI**

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Psychotherapist  
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# Breaking the cycle

Society as a whole tends to shun things that are unknown to them. Something different is often perceived as threatening. As a result, we try to minimise that threat by invalidating it, or brushing it off.

A person with anxiety, for example, can be coined as a “worry-wart,” or someone who “takes stress unnecessarily upon themselves.” The implication being that one does not *have* anxiety, but rather, *chooses* to be anxious.

Similarly, a person with depression is often considered self-indulgent, and lazy. What people do not understand, however, is that these conditions are not a choice or an indulgence. People with depression and/or anxiety are often so debilitated by their overwhelming sense of sadness that they have somatic responses: eating and sleeping too much or too little; stomach-aches; chest pains; breathing problems. These somatic symptoms are

**What is Depression?**

Depression is a medical disorder that affects the way you feel. People with depression often have a persistent feeling of sadness, irritability or anger. Other symptoms include having low energy, negative thinking, self-confidence issues and the inability to regulate their emotions.

**What is Anxiety?**

Anxiety is a mental disorder in which, the person feels an overwhelming sense of fear, stress or worry. People with anxiety often have feelings of restlessness, irritability, panic, or dread. Almost everyone has had anxiety at some point in their life, but may not be able to recognise it.



not imaginary. They are the body's way of telling us that our minds are suffering.

Since the start of the pandemic, many of us are struggling with anxiety and depression. How much longer do we need to stay in isolation? Am I putting my family members at risk by going to work? Are we confined to a lifetime of masks and fear and six feet distance forever? Almost all of us, at some point, has either felt the weight of COVID or worried about its effects. However, we suffer in silence.

Because mental health, in society's eyes, is considered a “weakness.”

And so, we attempt to cover it up, not understanding that we are causing more damage to not only ourselves, but also, our families. Because by labelling mental health as a problem for the weak, we are disrespecting a person who is truly suffering, and is too scared to get help, for fear of being judged.

**And how does that help anyone?**

We must move past this, get over our

prejudices regarding mental health. We have to fight this stigma. Because with the world in disarray, we must keep going and help others on the way. The only way to break the cycle is to face the problem head on, and acknowledge it as a legitimate issue, so that people can get the help that they need. Only then will we be able to fight the monster of mental illness.

**Photo: Collected**

## নারী দিবসের শুভেচ্ছা

বিশ্বে যা কিছু মহান সৃষ্টি, চির কল্যাণকর  
অর্ধেক তার করিয়াছে নারী, অর্ধেক তার নর।

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KOHINOOR  
CHEMICAL





# Rumana Rahman: A leader, an inspirer

Rumana Rahman has recently marked her place in the history of the corporate world by becoming the first Bangladeshi to be appointed as the Asia Pacific and Middle-East (APME) Regional Head of Talent, Culture and Inclusion at British American Tobacco Group (BAT).

Not only has she worked tirelessly and reached a position unimaginable for many, Rahman's story also bears witness to how she has pushed herself to be her best version every step of the way.

After completing her BBA from IBA, Rumana joined BAT Bangladesh as a management trainee in 2001. From then to now being the Regional Head of HR, her responsibilities have grown and her journey has been subjected to countless obstacles. When asked how she managed it all, Rumana replied, "I believe in certain things, like your hard work, commitment and passion remain unchanged even when you switch from one role to another. What has really changed over the years is the influence I had on leadership by becoming an enabler to the commercial side through HR interventions."

Having had regional and global exposure in terms of talent development, we asked for her input on how Bangladeshi talent compared to that of other countries.

She said that if you look into our leadership team here at BAT group, there are currently two Bangladeshis occupying leading positions in the APME region, which itself speaks volumes. She also spoke about how having Bangladeshis playing vital roles in various teams of BAT across the globe feels rather rewarding. "Beyond BAT, I see huge potential and Bangladeshi human capital comes off as resilient, intelligent, hardworking and extremely passionate," she added.

We then proceeded to discuss what further work Bangladesh can do on human capital development to ensure a robust talent pipeline, where Rumana stressed on the role of mid level management. Since it is the mid level where the decision-making, risk-taking and creativity expands, a focused structured development as well as investment in leadership skills will eventually help them take up bigger roles on a global scale.

The dynamics of the corporate world are changing continuously and the global HR is expected to match its pace. There is also a growing tendency to promote diversity and inclusion agenda across the world. Of these, which trends can be adapted by Bangladesh with regard to women to ensure gender equality in decision-making positions?

"To me it's not a case of percentage, but the idea that organization demography should represent the profile of its consumers and society. I believe women bring different perspectives to leadership and significantly improve the emotional intelligence of an organization which is crucial for it to develop sustainably," said Rumana Rahman. According to her, Bangladesh is way ahead of many South Asian countries in terms of women inclusion with the country being led by a female and 80% of the workforce of the leading RMG sector being women.

Rumana says, "There is work to be done in terms of women inclusion in the corporate and entrepreneurial sector, but even that has improved a lot over the last decade. It is not only about including women in an organization's structure, but also catering to needs that maybe unique to the gender, and only then can we expect an improvement in the qualitative parameter of an organization."

While discussing women's inclusion in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Rumana talked about BAT Bangladesh's unique program, Supernova, a mentoring platform for aspiring females in STEM which aims at paving a path for them to corporate. Mentored by the Operations Leadership team, Supernova nurtures confidence and provides encouragement to help women grow in leadership roles.

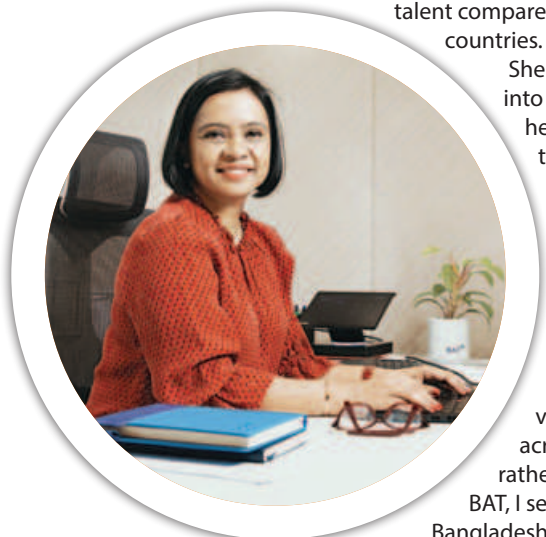
The ongoing pandemic has weighed heavy on our mental health. When asked about the importance of employee wellbeing, this leader smiled explaining how this could be a blessing in disguise. She emphasized how these difficult times let us see the true value of mental health. "In Bangladesh, I see mental awareness facilities now where they can reach out and feel safe to express themselves. In my view, organizations allowing their employees to avail this opportunity are progressive."

Further adding from her experience she said, "The biggest thing to me as a leader is recognizing that a team member maybe feeling down and understanding that they bring not only their work but also their emotions into the organization. By acknowledging this we can build better and fulfilled employees."

Before concluding our discussion with this trailblazer, we asked for her valuable suggestions for young professionals entering the workforce, to which she said-

"I think youngsters now have more resources, technology and more role models to look up to. What they can add to the mix is consistency as well as patience because success does not come overnight."

**By Nusrath Jahan**  
**Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed**



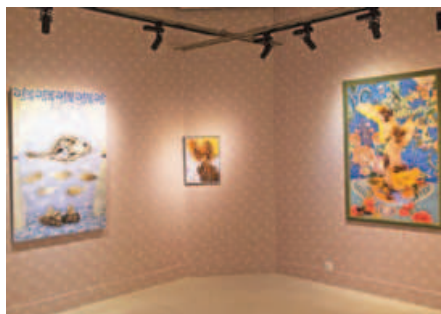


# Tongue Tied: Highlighting under appreciated cultural elements through photography and art



The creative arts have always been a weapon for self-expression, social and political commentary, and highlighting tradition. As such, Habiba Nowrose, a lens-based artist, is passionate in talking about women's rights, gender identity, and mythology through her work. She is also keen on illustrating the simplicity of Bengali culture through her work, which is meticulously prepared as she takes detailed mental notes of the objects, colours, and patterns, which fascinate her and ingrain that into her work. Her creative eye plays a crucial function in her image creation.

As a lens-based artist, Habiba not only refers to photography, as she believes that only photography does not fully capture the essence of her work. Starting from her setup, stage preparations, shooting process, and articulating the scene of the photo, there is a lot that goes into capturing her vision. She uses this platform to express herself and her ideals given her passion for the arts from her very childhood. She was unable to pursue her passion until



university, which led her to traditional fine arts and photography. Additionally, her academic background in gender studies allowed her to understand society's gender and sexual politics better, which inspired her to work with gender issues. Her curiosity to explore more intricacies for Bengali society has always been prevalent and has led to her exhibition 'Tongue Tied,' launched back on 25 February, 2022 and will continue until 10 March, 2022, at Alliance Française.

The theme of this exhibition is the heritage and tradition we tend to shun. Using food items, something similar to assemblage, Habiba sculpts her subject in a setting that would make the audience see something unique yet familiar. As Bengalis, food items like 'Shutki,' 'Bhuri,' 'Moa,' 'Hawai Mithai' are part and parcel of our souls. However, with modern days and the elitist mentality, some rarely admit to loving these foods in public. At times, there is an element of discomfort and inferiority associated with admiring these traditional foods. Habiba's 'Tongue Tied' addresses this discomfort and the stigma surrounding these culturally unique items that shape our identity.

Habiba also integrates textile into her work. There are certain kinds of clothes which we tend to associate with lower classes and lacking sophistication. With the minimalist trend being so popular, someone might consider loud, bold colours to be distasteful. Habiba's work aims to change perceptions by taking these

traditional, simple clothes, that people do not often acknowledge as tasteful, and present it in an idiosyncratic manner.

Habiba says, "I've tried to keep these elements in my art present. Particularly, the element of discomfort which is associated with basic traditional clothes and food items, which are unique aspects of who we are as Bengalis."

Unlike most artists, Habiba does not try to tell a holistic story through her portraits and photographs. Rather, she takes her concept and derives her inspiration to create an overall conceptual illustration. Essentially, the audience does not see a story or a journey of her subject, but experiences a concept in different shapes. In 'Tongue Tied,' the audience experiences the modern day discomfort associated with multiple foods and clothing, through various shapes and sculptures.

**By Puja Sarkar**  
**Photo: Habiba Nowrose**

## #PRESS RELEASES

# Le Reve launches new collection for spring/summer 2022

Le Reve has launched their latest Spring/Summer 2022 collection titled 'Liberate.'

The CEO of Le Reve, Monnujan Nargis said, "In this collection Le Reve has highlighted 70's polka dots, suspending and tumbling floral, classic paisley along with optical geo pattern. An optical geo pattern is a means to show the digital influence of the present date. Another theme is the Hacked Utopia — an ongoing most talked topic in world fashion — an idea of attaining the long-cherished dream of men to escape the mundane daily life."

This collection at Le Reve also includes prints focusing on the arts and painting like the art of Kintsugi, pictured through digital patchworks. Besides, one can also notice motifs inspired by the paintings of various master painters.

This collection promotes the pallets of bright summer colours like brick red, teal, bottle green, mustard yellow, navy blue, orange, yellow, blue, ash, grey, pink, vermillion red, peacock blue, white and black. Cotton, twill, voile and Raimi cotton, viscose, slub, linen, smooth georgette, textured faille, organza, crepe silk, cotton



pique, and single jersey will help in the scorching summer heat.

Le Reve has paid notable attention to

the neckline designs in terms of women's clothing. Starting from shirt collar to frill-trimmed, boat neck, v slit, mandarin, round

band, high neck, kimono, Ascott, etc have been included in the kameez, top, tunic, salwar kameez, sharara suit, shirt, shrug, and jumpsuit lines. For bottoms, they have designed harem pants, leggings, and matching palazzos.

For men, there are short and long sleeve casual shirts, Henley and classic t-shirt, polo, and gym vest, Bermuda shorts, chinos, cotton, Tencel, and premium quality pajamas. These pajamas are incredible for both casual wear and loungewear.

Colours of spring and comfort of summer together make up the Kids Spring/Summer-wear Collection. Frock, ghagra-choli, tunic, salwar kameez, kaftan, 2-piece set, and knitted tops have been designed for female kids. Whereas, male kids have the options of t-shirt, polo, Panjabi, casual shirt, and shorts. There is a new summer collection for new-borns as well.

Matching hat, sandals, bags, purse, accessories, and home décor products will also be available in the new Spring/Summer collection.

For more information, visit [www.facebook.com/lervecraze](https://www.facebook.com/lervecraze)



#BUSINESS

# Sneho: The one-stop needed for parents and their children

In a society where the most highlighted achievements are those of men, the accomplishments of women tend to go unacknowledged. These women contribute to society and aid struggling families in various, meaningful ways. Such is the story of our young entrepreneur, Irmana Monem. Her e-commerce platform, Sneho, launched in 2021, with a desire to make quality products accessible to mothers.

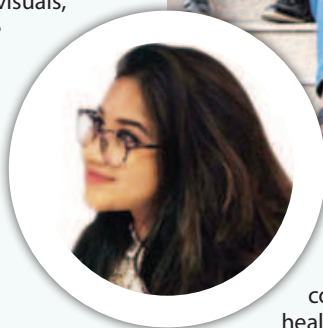
Irmana's story starts as a young woman hailing from an academic field heavily dominated by men. She attended a women's college in Boston, majoring in Computational Mathematics concentrated on Finance and minoring in Business Management and Leadership for Social Impact. She currently works as a Data Scientist in the United States while also spearheading her business. Her entrepreneurial journey was influenced by the three pillars in her life, her grandfather, father, and mother. She says, "My grandfather ingrained in me the notion of nation-building and touching the lives of people through quality products and services, while my father taught me the importance of continuous growth, creativity and innovation within an organisation." Irmana further adds, "My mother's fierce advocacy for women and children pushed me to try and create solutions for modern day families."

Undoubtedly, mothers play a crucial role in our society, moulding and nurturing the next generation. Irmana aims to bring innovative and convenient solutions 'to assist and enable mothers to do what they do best.' Having witnessed

conversations surrounding motherhood and a lack of trustworthy baby products, a responsibility to ensure access to authentic, affordable and high quality products weighed on Irmana. Her background in tech and passion for innovation within the women's space motivated the conceptualisation of Sneho.

Sneho has positioned itself as a brand that belongs to its customers. Almost every aspect of operations is tailored to the needs and wants of their customers. Starting from the name, the visuals, the content produced, to the products they stock — the audience has a say in it all. This may be the reason for their incredible 57 percent customer retention rate, one of the highest in the market and a community of 50,000 customers across platforms.

In essence, Sneho goes beyond being an e-commerce platform for buying commodities for baby care and mother care at affordable rates. Sneho's mission is to provide economical and convenient solutions to struggling families. The journey from wanting to establish a family to actually doing so can be difficult, and Sneho wants to be there for their customers every step of the way. When a baby is born, a family is bound by many concerns and responsibilities. Sneho's job is to make this transition as seamless as possible by helping families save time and money. In every area of the parenting process, Sneho tries to ensure affordability, authenticity, and innovation. Their exponential growth has made way for a richer website with advanced data collection



possibilities.

"My background is in big data and the data we collect helps analyse the health of my business as well as the efficiency of the strategies we put in place. There is a lot of scope to improve operations and overall customer experience with simple technological tweaks. It is also useful for prototyping and forecasting new ideas. My aim is to make Sneho a company rooted in technology and data driven decisions."

Sneho is unique as it specialises in one segment and is catered to families. Anyone in a family, regardless of age, can access the website to buy what they need knowing that the products are legitimate, quality-checked, and price-matched. Additionally, Sneho houses products from all major local manufacturers and international companies while heavily promoting small businesses. "There was a remarkable rise in female agency during the pandemic which resulted in many women-run businesses. My goal is to provide structure to this fragmented market with adequate scale up

solutions, exposure and logistic support. This desire of mine stems from a lack of investors willing to back female led businesses. Through Sneho, I plan to provide access to anyone who has the ability to write a check by creating an informal network of female investors as well as garnering potential projects by reaching out to the businesses ourselves."

Irmana says, "From a young age, I knew I wanted to work with and for women." Given their growth last year, Sneho plans to expand into various other segments within this year while still innovating in the mother and baby segment. She hopes to provide more support to families regarding postpartum and wellness, pregnancy nutrition, baby weaning and providing access to an expert. She argues that there needs to be a re-evaluation of responsibilities in family settings where both parents are able to contribute equitably. However, until then, Sneho aims to be an efficient digital assistant for working or stay at home parents.

**By Puja Sarkar**  
**Photo: Sneho**





## BANGLADESHI YOUTH AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE CLIMATE MOVEMENT



"While conducting surveys in the coastal areas, I realised how climate change was at the root of issues like lack of education, malnutrition, and soaring child marriage rates. However, 'climate change' is not a term that the masses are familiar with. I could not go up to the people alone and raise awareness about it. So, I formed a team and co-founded YouthNet for Climate Justice," shares 27-year-old Shakila Islam from Barishal. YouthNet for Climate Justice is a coastal youth-led movement that is now the largest network for climate advocacy in Bangladesh. When she was only 12 years old, Shakila and her family were hit by Super Cyclone Sidi, which affected more than eight million people in the country. Since then, she has been passionate about tackling the climate crisis and its multisectoral impacts. "Climate change is not just an environmental, economic or development problem; it is also a

gender, human rights and social justice issue," says Shakila. Since 2016, YouthNet for Climate Justice has been implementing various campaigns to establish the rights of people affected by climate change in the southern regions of Bangladesh. So far, they have mobilised two thousand volunteers and served 50 thousand members of marginalised communities across 40 districts. In 2018, they received the Joy Bangla Youth Award for their efforts. "Although we are one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change, we only contribute to global emissions by around 0.3 percent. This is a climate justice issue that must be brought up on global platforms," shares Shakila. Not only did she represent Bangladesh at the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and climate session, but she also was a founding member of Fridays for

Future Bangladesh, in line with the global climate strike movement led by Greta Thunberg. YouthNet for Climate Justice has also created a Coastal Youth Action Hub that promotes innovative solutions to adapt to climate change issues. "It is not possible to always migrate from coastal areas that have been hit by natural disasters. Therefore, we have initiatives to help people adapt to the climate crisis. Women and girls are the most vulnerable to climate issues since there are risks of sexual harassment and child marriage. We help mitigate these risks," says Shakila. When asked about her future plans, Shakila shared: "When Greta Thunberg started the global climate strike movement, she was only 13 years old. If she can do it, then why can't our Bangladeshi youth? I want to make Bangladesh a role model in tackling climate change."

By Mayabee Arannya

## LEADING A COMMUNITY OUT OF DISASTER



Hashi Begum, from Uttar Manoshitola village in Barguna, took matters into her own hands when the Covid-19 pandemic first hit. She not only resolved to take care of her own family but her community as well. With the aid of the Cash for Work (CFW) scheme funded by Disaster Response and Recovery Facility (DRRF) of UNDP Bangladesh, and the support of her local community leaders, Hashi Begum became the resident hero of her village. "My husband had lost his job which was the only source of income for our family. On top of that, no one in the village would believe there was such a deadly virus that was spreading rapidly," recalls Hashi Begum. The socio-economic conditions were becoming more calamitous every day, more so in the rural areas of Bangladesh. Hashi Begum mentioned how many people in her community were initially sceptical about the virus, and did not believe they would be affected by it. "Amader gram e Corona nai (There's no such thing as Coronavirus in our village)" is what they would say when told to take adequate precautions. However, a determined Hashi refused to give in to the ignorance, misinformation,

and scepticism surrounding the dire reality of Covid-19. "I started talking to people around me, and convinced them to take Covid-19 seriously. I explained the concept of social distancing, and distributed masks to stop the spreading of the virus," explained Hashi Begum. "Luckily, they believed in me, as I was a member of their community and soon, they started wearing masks and maintaining safety measures such as regular hand-washing and social distancing." However, things took a turn for the worse when the already struggling village of Uttar Manoshitola came face-to-face with a cyclone. The community had already been suffering economically due to the extensive lockdown, and now the remaining resources were also being laid to waste. Hashi stepped up to lead her village to safety, ensuring that the locals reached the shelter safely, distributing relief, helping persons with disabilities, all the while maintaining Covid-related safety protocols. To address the economic fallout of Covid-19 and Cyclone Amphan, UNDP's DRRF in collaboration with Uttaran, started a CFW scheme in the areas that

had suffered the most. Hashi's village was on the list. The chairman of Gourichonna Union, in Barguna Sadar Upazila, listed Hashi Begum in the CFW scheme. As part of the arrangement, Hashi and other community members were tasked with repairing a road over the course of 20 days, where they would earn 300 taka for each day of work. Familiar with community work and a keen learner, Hashi took on an organisational role. She managed a group of 21 women and four men. With the money Hashi received while working for the CFW scheme, she bought a cow to help her earn some money by selling milk. Young, strong-willed and dedicated, Hashi Begum is a beacon of hope in her community who has shown exceptional organisational and leadership skills. "I have already worked actively with this campaign among a few others and I plan on continuing to partake in active community management in the future," says Hashi, who keeps herself involved with various types of community services.

By Maisha Syeda

## A HERO OF THE PANDEMIC



"I come from a conservative background, where women played a subservient role. There is a saying that women of Mollabari cannot do anything on their own. However, this changed when I came into contact with some people who were working for community development. They inspired me to work for numerous voiceless women, and over the course of time, I have united 1,05,000 families through 425 Community Development Committees (CDCs)," says Kohinoor. Kohinoor Akter, now 42 years of age, was initially unable to continue her education after SSC. Despite the many barriers that stood in her way, she took inspiration from the people she met through the CDC and continued to work for her community. Now, Kohinoor, a mother of two, is an inspiration for thousands of women in Chattogram.

During the pandemic, she worked extensively in her area by taking initiatives to curb the spread of Covid-19, establishing 374 hand-washing stations and distributing over 66,000 bars of soap to the local people. Moreover, she has put relentless efforts to prevent child marriages and domestic violence. "Whenever we are informed about a child marriage being arranged, we immediately go there and try our best to convince the girl's parents about the problems and challenges of child marriage. Our main goal is to ensure that the young girls can continue their education and become self-reliant. However, this does not always work, in which case we inform the local commissioner to take legal measures to stop it," shares Kohinoor. Due to her hard work and perseverance,

Kohinoor was elected as the president of the town federation. She works with the CDC and helps them in their planning activities. Kohinoor also created a Facebook group and website to provide information and services to members of the town federation. As a representative of women in leadership, she participated in an international seminar on housing initiatives in Dubai. Under her leadership, the town federation secured four contracts estimated to be worth around 1.25 crore taka. "I am honoured to have the appreciation of my community," says Kohinoor. "In the future, I hope more women like me come forward to combat poverty, illiteracy and the patriarchy, so that we can make the lives of women in the country better."

By Priyam Paul



Shahinur Akhter, now 32, was abandoned by her mother at the age of only six. One fateful winter evening, a gypsy man found a crying Shahinur at the local railway station (often called Boro Station) in Chandpur municipality. The man took her back to his family, and it was his wife, Moyna Begum, who raised Shahinur like their own daughter. "Growing up, life was difficult. While my dream had always been to finish my education, I could only study up to the fifth grade. My family was struggling financially, so I had to stop studying and help out my mother," said Shahinur. Later on, Shahinur started a sewing apprenticeship, where she earned 200 taka every month, while also learning the craft. After one full year of training, she bought a sewing machine for 1500 taka and started her own tailoring business. At one point she was earning 1000 taka per month from her small business. A friend of Shahinur's, Lucky, advised her to save 100 taka per month in the post office savings scheme. Using the

## AN UNFALTERING SPIRIT

return from this savings, Shahinur purchased fabric from the market to sew and start selling children's clothes. This doubled her monthly income to 2000 taka. In 2006, Shahinur married a member of the gypsy community, Arab Ali (35). Together, they had two children, and built a house from tin and bamboo on the riverbanks of Dakatia, with the permission of the gypsy community. They financed the construction using a loan from Asha Samiti (micro-credit institution). While things were going well for the family, tragedy struck in the form of Cyclone Amphan in 2020, which destroyed their home. The family had to take another loan, from Arab Ali's office, to rebuild their home. However, even when faced with disaster, Shahinur was resolute in helping her community thrive. She joined the Char Bepari Bari Community Development Committee

(CDC) formed by Chandpur Municipality and UNDP. The members of the CDC elected Shahinur as the president, and she was given the responsibility of being a community leader. "I was selected by UNDP to receive 10,000 taka for business assistance in 2020. This is when I restarted my sewing business. Now, I earn 5,000 taka every month from my business, from which I save 1000 taka and spend the rest on the education of my children," said Shahinur. "In the future, I hope to expand my sewing business and recruit women who I can train. I want to help other women make a living so that they can improve their lives. And someday, when my business is even more successful and I have saved some money, I will buy a piece of land where we can build a permanent residence," Shahinur concluded.

By Aaqib Hasib



## A CHAMPION IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE



"My life was not easy. When I was only 17 years of age, my family married me off against my will. I wanted to go to school and finish my education, but the responsibilities of my husband's family fell on my shoulders. As a result, I was only able to study up to the eighth grade," said Shantona Chakma, now 38 years old. However, she always possessed wit and sensibility that made her aware of her surroundings—both people and nature. Shantona possessed a strong voice against all injustices, particularly in the fight for women's rights in her community. This led to her eventual appointment as the "Karbari" (traditional village head) of Ramharipara, Ghilachari Union, Naniarchar Upazila, Rangamati. The hill tracts have seen massive deforestation, hill cutting, and other man-made environmental hazards, slowly pushing the nature of livelihoods of the areas' people into grave risks. This phenomenon deeply concerned Shantona, as someone who was just as close to the



nature as her people. She realised how climate change had impacted her life for the last two decades and those of other women from her community. This realisation came particularly after an incident of a landslide that took the lives of 19 people in her area, including children. Shantona wanted to work on these issues, and soon after, became a central committee member of the CHT Village Common Forest (VCF) Network and the secretary of CHT women headman (traditional mouza head) and Karbari Network. As part of these two bodies, Shantona contributed to conserving natural forests and resources, monitoring VCF management, and protecting safe habitats for wildlife. She received several trainings, participated in workshops, meetings, seminars, conferences, dialogues, learning visits, and conveyed messages on deforestation and watershed conservation to her locality and beyond. To make a sustainable environmental impact, she

developed sustainable VCFs and registered them under the Rangamati Hill District Council. Even then, the fight was far from over. VCF's property was converted to personal property and sold by influential quarters with ill motives. This resulted in a decrement in the number of VCFs in Naniarchar from 15 to 8. Shantona became vigilant, and kept monitoring the remaining eight VCFs. She disseminated conservation messages received from USAID and UNDP projects to VCF committees, and has been working even harder to register more VCFs under the network to conserve natural forest. "In the future, I hope to continue helping people who are struggling with their lives. If I can help those who are helpless, provide shelter to the homeless, and give food to those who need it, then I will be happy," concluded Shantona.

By Nahaly Nafisa Khan



# HEARTY MEALS

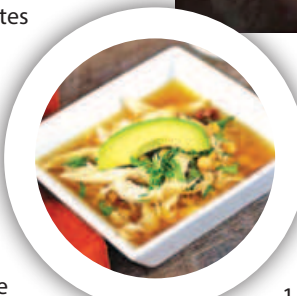
## CHICKEN AND MUSHROOM SOUP WITH PUFF PASTRY

### Ingredients

2 skinless chicken legs  
1L chicken stock  
150ml dry cider  
1 onion, finely chopped  
1 bay leaf  
250g chestnut mushrooms, thickly sliced  
4tbsp corn flour, blended with 4tbsp water  
4tbsp cream  
Flour for sprinkling  
500g readymade puff pastry  
Salt and pepper

### Method

Place the chicken legs in a large saucepan with the stock, cider, onion and bay leaf. Cover and simmer for 25 minutes until the chicken is cooked. Add mushrooms and simmer for a further 10 minutes. Remove the chicken and set aside. Remove and discard the bay leaf. Stir the corn flour into the stock. Heat, stirring continuously until boiling and thickened. Remove from the heat and leave to cool. Remove the meat from the chicken legs and tear into pieces. Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6. Stir the chicken and cream into the soup. Season to taste with salt and pepper then ladle into over proof bowls. They should be about three quarters full. Lightly flour the surface and then roll out the pastry. Cut out rounds or squares large enough to cover the top of the bowls with one centimeter or half inch overlap. Brush the rim of each bowl with water, lay the pastry on top, press around the rim and pierce the centers. Bake in the preheated oven for 20-25 minutes until the pastry is golden. Serve immediately.



## CHICKEN, AVOCADO AND CHIPOTLE SOUP

### Ingredients

1.5L chicken stock  
2-3 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
1-2 dry chipotle chillies, thinly sliced  
1 avocado  
½ lime juice

3-5 spring onions, thinly sliced  
400g skinless, boneless cooked chicken breast, torn into bite-sized pieces  
2 tbsp chopped fresh coriander  
1 lime, cut into wedges, to serve

### Method

Place the stock in a large saucepan with the garlic and chillies and bring to boil. Cut the avocado in half around the stone. Twist apart, and then remove the stone with a knife. Remove and discard the skin, dice the flesh and toss in the lime juice to prevent discoloration. Arrange the spring onions, chicken, avocado and coriander in warmed bowls. Ladle hot stock over and serve

immediately with lime wedges.

## DUM PANEER KALIMIRCH

### Ingredients

400g cottage cheese  
2 medium sized onions  
1-inch ginger  
4-5 cloves garlic  
2-3 green chillies  
½ medium sized bunch of fresh coriander leaves  
¼ medium sized bunch of fresh mint leaves  
1 cup yoghurt  
Oil, as required  
2 tbsp pure ghee  
2 bay leaves  
1-inch stick cinnamon  
3-4 green cardamoms  
3-4 cloves  
2 tbsp coriander powder  
1 tsp cumin powder  
Salt to taste  
½ cup fresh cream  
1 tbsp peppercorn, crushed  
1 tsp garam masala powder

### Method

Cut paneer into one-inch sized cubes. Finely slice onion. Grind ginger, garlic and green chillies to a fine paste. Finely chop fresh coriander and mint leaves. Whisk yoghurt to a smooth consistency. Heat oil in a wok and deep fry onions till golden brown. Drain on the absorbent paper and cool. Grind the fried onions with 2 tablespoons of water to a smooth paste. Preheat oven to 200°C. Heat ghee in a narrow mouthed pot, add bay leaves, cinnamon, cardamoms and cloves. Stir fry briefly. Add ginger, garlic and green chillies paste and sauté on high heat for half a minute. Add the brown onion paste, whisked yoghurt, coriander powder, cumin powder and salt to taste. Stir well, add 1 cup of water and cook on high heat, stirring frequently, till the gravy starts boiling.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 11



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#FOOD & RECIPES

# FEED THE SOUL WITH HOMEMADE FOOD FROM CUMIN

Living in Dhaka can become tedious. The average food is barely worth mentioning and cravings for homemade food arises more often than we'd like to admit. What if you had the option to help yourself to your favourite dish, homemade and prepared with all the care and the best ingredients available?

## Cumin by Three Sisters

'Cumin by Three Sisters' is a homemade food business that started with three sisters who were loathing the confines of lockdown during the pandemic and decided to start something that they would enjoy. Cooking delicacies has always been appealing to them and inspired by the eldest sibling, they launched Cumin in the November of 2020.

Out of ten siblings, the three sisters began their journey taking inspiration from their friends and family members. The eldest, Nazma Begum had the inspiration for Cumin to begin with and the younger sister Parveen Sultana and the youngest sister, Sharmin Sultana, eventually formed the trinity for Cumin which is one of the most top-rated names on Cookups presently. While all three of them are fashion designers, they are having a blast cooking exquisite dishes and sharing them with others through Cumin.

The name cumin was obviously inspired by the spice itself. But why cumin and not something else? "Cumin is one of the most commonly used ingredients in cooking. It's

frequently used in our Indian subcontinent and even in the west, it's almost like a constant ingredient, much like salt and pepper so we decided to take inspiration from cumin's universality," said Nazma Begum, the eldest sister who can identify the ingredients of a dish and later recreate it just from the taste.

## The dishes

Celebrated American chef Thomas Keller once said, "A recipe has no soul. You, as the cook, must bring soul to the recipe," and the combined efforts of the three sisters seem

to be doing that pretty well with Cumin. You can tell by tasting any of their dish. Take the Doi Bora for example. If you take one bite, you will be compelled to take another, and then another.

Their signature dishes include, but are not limited to,

Badshahi beef nehari, shahi tukra, shahi malai jorda, shahi morog pulao, kabab platter, keema polao and a Ramadan special: suta kabab. Considering treating yourself to some quality homemade food? Take your pick from Cumin's menu. What's even more interesting is that if you do not see your favourite dish in the menu, you can contact them and ask them to make your favourite dish and they will deliver.

There are also a number of dessert items such as caramel pudding, shahi firni, kunafa and many more. The vibrant presentation of the dishes can only be overdone by their palatable taste.

One can order from Cookups or through their Facebook page. Recently, they reached an agreement with Foodpanda as well.

## The quality

While it is true that Cumin started recently, they have gathered quite some experience already. Every day, there are orders of their signature dishes and during Ramadan, the demand increases significantly. They have already handled some big orders where they had to serve more than 1500 portions every day for an entire month. If you require any specific dish for festivities like a small home centred wedding (or gaye hold platter) or whatnot, cumin can prepare the platters according to your need.

It is insisted that you place your order at least 24 hours before you expect the delivery because they use fresh ingredients and they will collect and use only the best ingredients for your dish. For example, they collect ghee from Narayanganj, direct from the source. Some rare ingredients and spices are also imported from Canada and Dubai. Ingredients such as yoghurt can go bad overnight and Cumin will only use freshly collected ones for your dish. And even though they keep saying "Quality over quantity," their portion size is more than agreeable.

If you are craving some homemade delicacies, why not try one of Cumin's signature dishes or platters for an indulging meal?

For more information or to order, visit their Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/CuminBD2020](https://www.facebook.com/CuminBD2020)

**By Ashif Ahmed Rudro**  
**Photo: Cumin**





#EMPOWERMENT

# GET ROLLING ON THE ROAD with Yamaha Riding Academy



In a city where the roads are mostly seen congested with traffic during its waking hours, travelling by a bike seems to be a fast and easy way to get around town and reach destinations timely. Although bike riding has predominantly been viewed as a task for men, women are gradually joining the journey. Bike riding not only enhances the ease of travelling for females by saving commute time, but it also eliminates the trouble of travelling via public transport to some extent.



However, with such eagerness and willingness of the female populace to learn bike riding, does sufficient mechanism and infrastructure exist in our country to make female drivers ready for the road?

Navigating along the streets on a two-wheeler can be risky, especially in a country that lacks adequate road infrastructure. Thus, it is necessary that riders are well-trained and equipped with appropriate knowledge and experience to drive on the roads.

Taking this issue into consideration, ACI Motors-YAMAHA Riding Academy was initiated in 2017 as the first training academy in the country. It is a training institution that initially offered training to females only who are interested in bike riding, as there are not sufficient training facilities for the women in our country.

"Riding a motorcycle is seen as a necessity, especially in Dhaka, as public transport is not women-friendly, but women do not have sufficient scope to learn. If we want to make this economy more vibrant, then we have to allow more females into the economy," remarked Subrata Ranjan Das, Executive Director at ACI Motors Limited.

With this notion in mind, Yamaha Riding Academy (YRA) enables women to travel independently at ease. Afsana Tilka, a YRA Trainer in Dhaka, said, "Through Yamaha Riding Academy, women are able to avoid travelling via public transport, and riding our own transport is definitely safer for us."

Since its inception, over 4000 people have been trained in a span of more than 100 batches, where each batch contains four classes. In Dhaka, two classes are conducted weekly in Tejgaon B G Press

Field every weekend, where along with providing training for bike riding, the trainees are taught about crucial safety and traffic laws and regulations.

For a comfortable training experience, females are taught by female trainers and vice versa, by a total of 20 trainers all over Bangladesh, who are well trained by Japanese trainers. Along with these, learners receive support in acquiring a learner's license through this institution.

Recently, the academy has initiated "Speed Girl Riding Trainer Hunt" via which it aims to spread its reach across all 64 districts of Bangladesh. Through this program, ACI Motors provided a Yamaha Ray ZR Street Rally Scooter for the trainers at a discounted price, along with necessary safety gear.

This has contributed towards the development of our economy on many levels. Chandrika Mondal, a Speed Girl Riding Trainer from Pirajpur, stated, "There are many women in rural areas who want to learn but did not have a medium. But now, I have trained students, service holders, and

housewives who are taking their children to school. It has vastly helped in progressing our society."

Keeping economic and societal aspects aside, the outcome of the program has ignited inspiration for many women as well. "I take inspiration from my trainees when I see they are learning to avoid switching several buses to travel for work, or when I see elderly women driving their children to school. These are true sources of inspiration for me," shared Takia Sultana Nova, a Speed Girl Riding Trainer in Chattogram.

Apart from that, ACI Motors-YAMAHA provides support to female riders when they want to travel across the country, giving necessary aid to the riders' community. As we make progressive strides towards breaking the bias every day, ACI Motors Yamaha makes considerable contribution in social work by distributing blankets to the destitute, celebrating Chocolate Day with street children and empowering the female population of our country.

**By Fariha Amber**





## Hearty Meals

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Add paneer pieces and mix in the chopped coriander and mint leaves. Stir in the fresh cream and crush pepper corns. Sprinkle garam masala powder. Cover the pot with a tight fitting lid and seal using whole wheat dough or aluminium foil. Place sealed pot in the preheated oven and cook for 200°C for 10-15 minutes. Open the pot just before serving and serve immediately.

### CREAMY PASTA SALAD

#### Ingredients

2L cream  
45g salt  
225g elbow macaroni  
2 tbsp white distilled vinegar  
Splash of olive oil

30g shallot, finely minced and rinsed  
60g celery, finely chopped  
30g scallion, thinly sliced  
¾ cup frozen peas (thawed)  
100g beef bacon, crispy and chopped  
5g fresh dill  
Black pepper, to taste  
Salt, to taste  
*For dressing —*  
1 egg  
50g sour cream  
2 tbsp dijon mustard  
15g sugar  
¾ tbsp lemon juice  
1 tsp Worcestershire  
5g salt  
½ clove garlic

300g neutral oil (light coloured olive oil, canola)

#### Method

Add water and salt to medium-large saucepan and bring to boil. Add pasta and boil for about 11 minutes or until tender. Drain, reserving a few scoops of pasta water. Add vinegar and a splash of olive oil to drained pasta and allow to cool to room temperature. For the dressing, combine all the ingredient in a blender and stream in oil. Once cooled, add shallot, celery, scallion, peas, beef bacon. Add a couple dollops of creamy dressing and a bit of pasta water and gently stir until pasta is well coated, but not swimming in dressing. Add dill, salt and pepper to taste, and stir to combine.

Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed and Collected

## ◆ HOROSCOPE ◆



### ARIES (MAR. 21-APR. 20)

Get involved in artistic groups. Sudden romantic infatuations could be an exciting connection. Expect problems settling matters. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



### TAURUS (APR. 21-MAY 21)

Don't lend or borrow. Don't let anyone at work take advantage of you. Your partner may make you feel jealous. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



### GEMINI (MAY 22-JUN. 21)

Be assertive in your approach. New romantic ties can be made. Make changes at home. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



### CANCER (JUN. 22-JUL. 22)

Take advantage of moneymaking ventures. Build on friendships. You will be uncertain of your feelings. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



### LEO (JUL. 23-AUG. 22)

Uncertainty regarding your direction is likely. Stay alert for deceptive actions. Be careful with your money. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



### VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 23)

Don't be forced into things. Get involved in intellectually stimulating groups. Empty promises are evident. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



### LIBRA (SEP. 24-OCT. 23)

Your sensitivity will be appreciated. Mingle with people you would want to impress. Don't go overboard. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



### SCORPIO (OCT. 24-NOV. 21)

Avoid taking any risks this week. Do some travelling. Don't make unreasonable promises. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



### SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

Lack of cash may put a damper on your plans. Romantic opportunities will be rare. Don't let jealousy get to you. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



### CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 20)

Take prompt action. Don't let anyone take you for granted. Take a step back and let others be. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



### AQUARIUS (JAN. 21-FEB. 19)

Be prepared to face opposition. Avoid functions with people who you don't like. It's time to make a choice. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



### PISCES (FEB. 20-MAR. 20)

Your relationships will be turbulent this week. Find ways to distract yourself. Your mood swings can result in loneliness. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

এখন

# ফাস্ট ওয়াশ

ডিটারজেন্ট পাউডার

১ কেজির সাথে

ফ্রী!



#ARTS

# THE DANCE EXPERIENCE

“Era had always been a sporty girl and so we enrolled her into other activities like, skating, tennis, martial arts, etc.,” said Fahmida Akhter, Era’s mother.

We are always on the lookout for originals and Mubashshira Kamal Era certainly qualifies as one. The Naogaon based young dancer is instantly recognisable. With a lean figure and an ‘almost floating’ style of walk, everyone who has had a glance of her would know she has something to do with contemporary dance or perhaps even ballet. “People mistake my steps as ballet, it’s actually fusion: at best you can call my style ‘contemporary,’ but definitely not ballet,” said the young dancer.

Era started dancing when she was only six years old and continued until she was dejected by the seniors for an accidental mishap in a group performance. “Funny thing is even my guru thought I was good for nothing and my movements were ungraceful.”

This particular event discouraged the parents to continue with their child’s dance tutoring and move on with athletics instead. “Era had always been a sporty girl and so we enrolled her into other activities like, skating, tennis, martial arts, etc.,” said Fahmida Akhter, Era’s mother.

Hailing from a relatively remote region of Bangladesh and a largely conservative society, Akhter proves herself to be an extremely progressive woman.

“I have four

daughters and all of them are a gem on their own. The eldest is an artist, second daughter a singer, Era a dancer and the youngest is a tabla player. I am a humanist, who strongly believes in the equal rights of both men and women. I have never considered my daughters any less than a boy or man their age.”

And the outcome is certainly beautiful, because Era also trained to be a part of the women’s national cricket team. A little lack of knowledge in bowling required her to fall back a year. This is the time when she faced the toughest hurdle of her life, to discover her one true calling. “Sometimes to get over with the frustrations, I would dance till I was tired. That is when I realised that maybe there was a special connection between me and dance. And surprisingly, people in my surroundings including my childhood guru who

rejected me once, begged my mother to allow me to train with him once again. “Mom, ultimately succumbed to his pleas and I began training ‘Bharatanatyam’ with him. I attended few shows and won quite a few awards in the months following. And then when I had high hopes of training further in India, the pandemic happened and the world came to a halt. This is when my ‘contemporary dance’ trainings geared up online, and I looked up inspiring free-form dancers on various YouTube channels and followed their unique styles. I danced with passion and all the emotions in my body. This made me feel complete as a human being,” stated Era.

There is certainly quality in Era’s work that resists any commonality. She calls herself a master of expressions and her performances do reflect the same.

In a brand-new photoshoot with Star Lifestyle, Era performed to the beats of a clicking camera instead of the energetic vibrations of Carnatic music. Her youthful exuberance was captivating, her energy contagious. Donning a white sari and a matching blouse, she mimed sweeping and posed for the camera, hopping and jumping back and forth. Her sari and her hypnotic performance became one with herself, putting the viewer in a trance.

Captivating and surreal, her performance expressed her love for dance. And our assumptions were finally confirmed. “This girl will go places; this girl will make it far.”

**By Mehrin Mubdi Chowdhury**  
**Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed**  
**Model: Mubashshira Kamal Era**  
**Styling: Isha Yeasmin**  
**Make-up: Sumon Rahat**

