

The power of volunteering

In a world that's seemingly disconnected, volunteering proves to be a defining act of our humility, reminding us that compassion and love know no bounds. Even an infinitesimal act of kindness can go a long way and have an enormous impact. Volunteering to give back to others is a timeless practice and a testament to how we can express our kindness. It's not just about extending a hand in assistance, but an activity that unifies people and helps communities thrive.



The act of selflessness brings together people for one shared purpose — to uplift the underprivileged. It has visible benefits and also the sense of friendship and belonging can really enhance a society or community's image. This is even more important in our country, as there are a significant number of people who do not even have their basic needs met.

While the impact of volunteering on society in general is undeniable, its effects on the volunteers themselves are equally compelling. The mere act of giving back instils a sense of nobility and humility in a volunteer and opens the doors to self-discovery and personal growth. It gives a refreshing perspective on the blessings they enjoy in life. It also boosts self-esteem, as helping the community makes you realise how much of a difference one can bring as an individual.

One of the many positive effects of volunteering is how contagious it can be. When people see how hard volunteers strive, they appreciate their hard efforts and more often than not, they tend to join in and contribute. A volunteer cleaning program will encourage children to join and teach them the values of cleanliness. A community garden might inspire more people to grow their own fruits and vegetables. A volunteer-led reading programme could spark the love for books in young minds. It is all just a matter of starting something selflessly that benefits others and you automatically see people join.

Volunteering is also a good way to break down social walls by bringing people of all backgrounds to cohesively work together for a common, altruistic goal. All stereotypes dissolve and people put aside their differences to help others. This is evident in a



place like a community soup kitchen where people from different walks of life come together and serve the less fortunate. Doing these activities volunteers and recipients bond over breaking bread.

Although some acts of volunteering do not make headlines, their effect is irrefutable. Behind every social event, every neighbourhood watch, and every person lifted out of despair there stands a valuable volunteer who has given their undying efforts to breed positivity and sympathy everywhere. Giving back is not limited by age, skill, or circumstance. Each one has the qualities and potential to contribute to making society better by helping those less fortunate than us. No matter how small the commitment may be, it reminds us that we are part of something bigger than ourselves.

By Abdul Warith Khan
Photo: Collected

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রূপচর্চায় আভিজাত্য...

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#PERSPECTIVE

Supporting your spouse in her CAREER

Marriage is tricky. It's not easy to navigate through married life because suddenly, the whole dynamic of your life changes and a new commitment binds you to your partner. And it becomes even trickier if there's not enough support from your partner. Working women face these issues more often than others and as her partner, it is your duty to support her.

Have their back

When we say support, we mean it in more than one way. There are many ways to show your support but, in our society, perhaps the most important one is that you have their back in social settings. Even in 2023, there are parents who do not like the fact that their daughter-in-law is a career-oriented person. The opinions of the in-laws can encumber heavily on a person and in our society, women have to suffer this more frequently.

If your significant other has a job and your parents are disapproving of it, it is your responsibility to stand up to them on her behalf. It doesn't matter whether she defends herself or not, it's important that you support her in such situations because the truth is — she shouldn't have to defend herself just for having a job.

Lend her a hand

After spending 8 hours at office, you come back home, take a shower and sit down to relax. On the other hand, a woman coming back from office is expected to go to the kitchen for another few hours and prepare dinner. It does seem a bit cruel. So, even if you can't cook; the least you can do is



help your wife with the dishes. It doesn't matter what you do, as long as you help her because after a whole day at work, every bit counts. If you lend her a hand, the chores will be done much quicker and both of you can sit back, relax, and talk.

Communicate

There's a saying; "Communication is Key," but what it doesn't specify is what the key is for. That's because communication is the key to everything, especially in relationships. Notice that we are not recommending to talk, or to listen specifically — rather to communicate. You may communicate in any way you wish, as long as it works out between the two of you.

Pursuing a career can be stressful and there can be other issues too. One of the most desirable ways you can support your spouse in her pursuit of career is by constantly communicating with her. Listen to her when she speaks, talk to her when she wants to discuss something and just be there for her through her journey.

Be her friend

Being a friend of your spouse is harder



than you'd imagine. It's a big package that includes mutual respect, motivation, cheering on, security and empathy. Be there for your spouse through every twist



and turn. Listen to her work-related stories, advise her on professional growth when she wants it, respect her decisions and make sure she feels empowered by your support in family settings. The corporate world is hard enough; having a good friend sure makes it tolerable.

Remember that supporting your spouse is essentially supporting yourself. Be happy for them and with them. Make sure to properly discuss important issues like family planning because careers can affect big decisions as such and both of you need to be on the same page regarding any sort of life-altering decisions.

By Ashif Ahmed Rudro



Mahmudul Hasan Mukul:

Weaving fashion dreams into reality

Staying relevant and creative is a difficult task in the ever-changing world of fashion. Yet, Mahmudul Hasan Mukul, a businessman, fashion editor, designer, stylist, and creative consultant has not only survived this ever-changing environment, but also irrevocably changed the field. In an exclusive interview with Star Lifestyle, Mukul discusses how he found his passion for the field of fashion, career turning points, and his creative process.

Mahmudul Hasan Mukul shares, "I have been in this industry for 18 years," which is a testament to his enduring commitment. He set off on his path as a young lad with an instinctive sense of style.

Mukul began his career as a fashion designer and spent over ten years developing his talents in this field. Today's industry has well-defined responsibilities but things were different when Mukul set out on this journey.

"When I started, things were not that specific," he recalls. The blurred lines between various fashion roles allowed him to explore the genre more extensively, eventually turning his passion into a profession.

In his career, Mukul has weathered the inevitable ups and downs of the fashion industry. "Consistency is key in every profession," he asserts. Amidst the fluctuations, Mukul remains steadfast in his pursuit of excellence. "I am my biggest critic, so I always try to keep evolving," he admits.

Setting trends in a resistant industry proved to be one of his early challenges.

"People in general resist change," he reflects. Breaking new ground in the fashion industry a decade ago was no easy feat. Mukul, however, persisted and toiled hard to bring professionalism to the sector, and he is pleased with the advancements over the years.

Remaining competitive is crucial in a sector where innovation is key. Mukul's approach centres around a brand's philosophy and market targeting.

"We focus on the market following a



particular theme," he explains. "Research is key in this regard," he emphasises, highlighting the importance of keeping tabs on global trends and the influence of seasons. However, he's quick to advise against losing one's individuality in the pursuit of trends. "Always bring your own creativity to current trends," he recommends, a valuable lesson for fashion enthusiasts.

As a free spirit, Mukul does not adhere to a rigid creative process. Anywhere may serve as a source of inspiration, whether it be a song, a movie, or a model's expression. He is a creative person who can get inspiration from the most unlikely places since his ideas and direction are greatly inspired by his surroundings.

Mukul understands that collaboration is the heartbeat of the fashion industry. "Collaboration is teamwork," he emphasises. Alignment with the team's vision is crucial for success. "Even if one person fails to understand the vision, then the project can't be a success," he notes. From photographers

to models to makeup artists, every contribution matters and plays a pivotal role in bringing his creative visions to life.

Whether orchestrating a fashion show or a photoshoot, Mukul's approach to realising creative visions varies. Fashion shows demand meticulous preparation, requiring solid management skills. His associates play an integral role in transforming ideas into reality. In contrast, photoshoots involve smaller teams, making the process more streamlined and easier to navigate.

Reflecting on his journey, Mukul holds a special place in his heart for projects from the early stages of his career. Events like Dhaka Fashion Week stand out, but the

turning point was his work with the brand, Ecstasy. Collaborating with an Indian crew was another memorable milestone in his illustrious career.

Mukul believes that his vision is his greatest strength. "To create something, you need a clear vision to execute the theme," he explains. Professionalism and teamwork are two of his strongest suits, underscoring the importance of these qualities in the fashion industry. His advice for aspiring fashion enthusiasts is clear — "Learn to share your vision clearly, and professionalism will take you a long way. Don't take up this profession as a hobby; make it your passion."

Mahmudul Hasan Mukul stands out as

a person of imagination, resiliency, and originality in the world of fashion, where change is the only constant. His path, with almost two decades of expertise, is a testament to the transformational power of enthusiasm and tenacity in the quest for style. Mukul's impact on the fashion business only becomes greater as he develops, encouraging many others to imitate his elegant moves.

By K Tanzeel Zaman
Photo: Adnan Rahman
In frame: Mahmudul Hassan Mukul
Styling: Sonia Yeasmin Isha
Makeup: Sumon Rahat

#FASHION & BEAUTY

The perfectly woven, purple Jamdani in heritage motifs; a swirly white gown; a faded, blue jeans paired with a checkered shirt — all prove why she has been the dream girl of our nation for over three decades. We got a chance to speak to Sadia Islam Mou while she was prepping for an exclusive photoshoot for Star Lifestyle.



SADIA ISLAM MOU

For starters, she is an A-list supermodel of Bangladesh, who returns with full force to the public eye, as beautiful as ever.

As far as her professional trajectory goes, Mou has been in the limelight mostly during the '90s, especially for her modelling career.

With her poise and charm, she was able to capture the hearts of millions and dominate the television screens of Bangladesh for over two decades. However, soon afterwards, to the utmost disappointment of her fans, she reduced her on-screen appearances to concentrate more on the home front, becoming a full-time mother.

Needless to say, the audience waited for her return with bated breath. They wanted to see their favourite celebrity make a reappearance on the screens, even if it meant taking up fewer roles than before.

However, Sadia Islam Mou refutes that she never left her fans.

"It's actually not true," she smiled. "It's only presumed that I worked more during the '90s because there was only a single TV channel back then, and the advertisements were aired throughout the year. People mistook this as working all year long! In reality, it was the same advertisement, the same jingle, playing over and over again," said Mou.

She added, "I am still the same as before. I choose my acting/modelling projects selectively and only work when the scripts seem enticing enough. I am ready to captivate my audiences as before, but as I said, the character needs to be interesting, fulfilling, and good fit for my personality and appeal."

When the entire world is buzzing on social media, Sadia Islam Mou's presence seems to be wanting in the digital world.

"This is true to a certain extent. While I do not have anything against social media and people promoting their work on it, I like keeping my personal world separate from all the chaos. I also believe that there should be a line drawn between our private and professional lives. This helps to

maintain sanity and keep our personal lives protected."

Even though one might say that she has taken a step back from the entertainment industry, one thing remains the same — her impeccable sense of fashion.

"Clothes need to feel comfortable; it really doesn't matter what you wear. One needs to own their look to feel complete and look their best," Mou believes. "If you are scantily dressed and feeling uncomfortable, it's definitely the wrong look for you. The same goes for the sari. If you are not comfortable wearing it, then wear something else that suits your personality — it may be a kurta or maybe even a top with plain jeans."

She went on to say, "Wear what suits you, know what looks good on you and heads will turn automatically. You don't have to try too hard — It will only show in your overall appearance."

We could not agree more with the style guru, who has owned each and every look until now. Sadia Islam Mou continues to mesmerise everyone around her, whenever and wherever

Of grace and glamour

she makes an appearance.

Our brief conversation with the famed model was seemingly at an end, but before we wrapped up, she had a few words to aspirants following her path. "Always remember that there are no shortcuts in life. I wish there was a golden solution for every problem, but there isn't. It's just plain hard work and pure dedication that will help to get to your preferred destinations. Keep on working hard,

and you will get there soon."

By Mehrin Mubdi Chowdhury
Photo: Adnan Rahman
Model: Sadia Islam Mou
Fashion Direction & Styling: Mahmudul Hasan Mukul
Wardrobe: MEHER by Samina Sara
Makeup: Sumon Rahat
Hair: Shuwle Akhtar
Ideation: Sonia Yeasmin Isha



Summer smoothie bowl recipes

Having smoothie bowls for breakfast is a healthy and refreshing way to start your day. Not only are they quick and easy to make, but the nutritional power of fruits also helps to energise your body. Smoothie bowls also require only a handful of ingredients, most of which are seasonally available or already lying in your pantry.

With smoothie bowls, the sky is really the limit. You can pick from an endless array of flavour-combinations and start your day in a healthy way. So, take advantage of the abundance of fruits available during this time of the year and whip up these delicious and fruity smoothie bowl recipes in no time!

DRAGON FRUIT SMOOTHIE BOWL

This smoothie bowl is packed with the goodness of strawberry, banana,

and dragon fruit. Sublime to the eyes with its lavender colour and slightly tart taste, you can play around with the toppings and add whatever your heart desires.

Ingredients

4 large strawberries
1 large banana
2 small dragon fruits
½ cup milk

For topping –

1 tbsp desiccated coconuts
¼ cup pomegranate arils
1 tbsp slivered almonds

Method

Remove the leafy parts of strawberries and cut them into halves. Peel the banana and dragon fruit and slice them as well. Blend everything together with milk until the consistency is smooth. Pour this in a bowl and top with desiccated coconut, slivered almonds, and pomegranate arils.

TROPICAL SMOOTHIE BOWL

This smoothie bowl is made with tropical fruits that are delicious to taste. Sweetness from mangoes, tartness from pineapples, and the mellowness of peaches, this one will make you come back for more. You can make it healthier by adding healthy toppings.

Ingredients

1 large mango
2 medium peaches
½ pineapple
½ cup pineapple juice
For the topping –
1 tbsp pumpkin seeds
¼ cup dried cranberries
1 tbsp chia seeds

Method

Cut the mango, pineapple, and peaches into cubes and drop them in a blender. Pour in pineapple juice and blend everything together until you get a smooth consistency. Alternatively, you can also freeze all the ingredients and blend them for a thicker consistency. Top this with pumpkin seeds, dried cranberries, and chia seeds for the perfect finish.

GREEN SMOOTHIE BOWL

Do not let this bright green smoothie bowl fool you – it's made with a hundred percent fruits! Packed with essential nutrients from kiwi and apples, it is soothing to the tummy as it is to the eyes. If you like spinach, then you can sneak that in too!

Ingredients

2 large kiwis
2 apples

1 banana

¼ cup almond milk

For

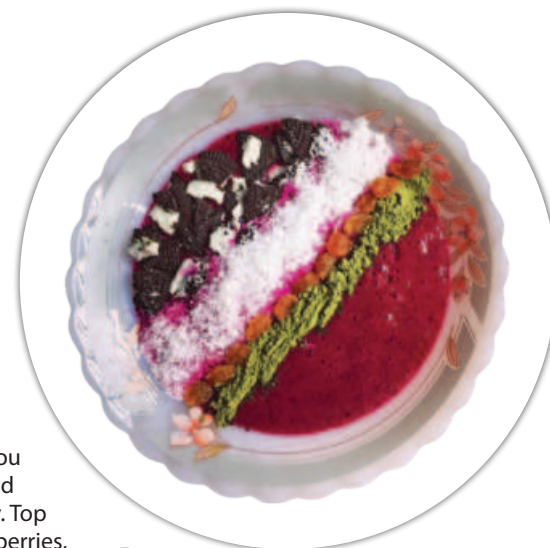
the

topping –

1 tbsp walnuts
1 tbsp raisins
1 tbsp pistachios
Sliced kiwi wheels

Method

Slice and dice the kiwis and banana and throw them in a blender with cubed apples. Pour in almond milk to get everything going and blend until it becomes a homogenous mixture. Pour this into a bowl and top with walnuts, raisins, and pistachios. Also top with a few slices of kiwi wheels for finishing touches.



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Food & Photo:
Fariha Amber



THINSPIRED

SIMRA KHAN

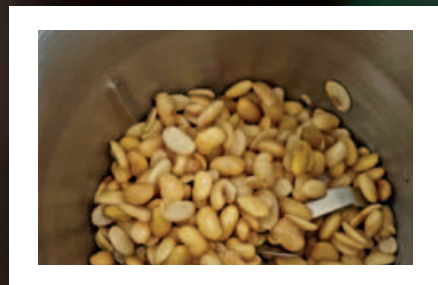
Fitness and Nutrition Coach, Mentor/
Guide at ThinspiredbySimra,
Managing Director Fit Food
Culinary Artist- Specialized in Healthy
Cooking



How to make soy milk

Soy milk is slowly replacing dairy milk worldwide. It is extracted by grinding soybeans and squeezing out the liquid from the mixture to form a milk-based item. This vegan alternative to dairy has been used predominantly in Asian cuisine since the 19th century, mostly in China.

These days, the choice of non-dairy, vegan, and plant-based food are in

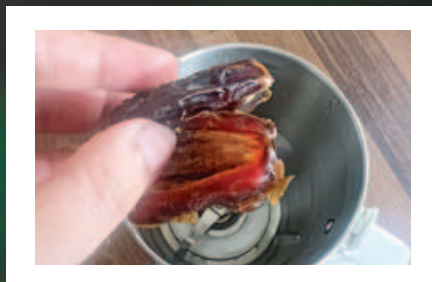


high demand, which makes many non-dairy such as almond milk, pistachio milk, cashew milk, and even oat milk options popular in the world.

Soy milk has a diversified usage in the culinary field. Its creamy texture, nutritional values (omega-3, anti-inflammatory agents, and antioxidants from flavonoids) makes it extra special. Plus, those who have lactose intolerance can comfortably incorporate this milk for tea, coffee, or smoothies in their daily life without feeling bloated or gassy.

Is soy milk good for you even if you are not lactose intolerant or a vegan?

Soy milk has antioxidants; it is anti-inflammatory and potentially has heart-protective properties. Research also suggests that soy foods may play a role in reducing the risk of chronic



diseases, such as heart disease and osteoporosis.

One cup of soy milk has 130 Calories approximately, 4.9g fat, 15g carb, 2g fibre, 7g protein, and 10g sugar. With nine essential amino acids and a good source of protein, it is the powerhouse of nutrition.

How is soy milk made at home?

Soy milk can be easily made at home and stored in the refrigerator for a longer period. It is way cheaper than store-bought ones, plus it is very easy to make. Here's how you can make it at home.

Soak: First, you need dry soya beans found easily in the supermarket. Soak 3 cups of soybean in 6 cups of water. Let it stay overnight to soak in all the moisture, getting softened and easy to peel. Remove the outer skin by rubbing them together. Rinse. If you skip this step, it's fine but this makes the bean cleaner for better colour of the milk. Drain the water and set aside.

Blend: In a blender, add 3-4 pitted dates for extra sweetness and flavour of the milk. You can also add vanilla essence and cinnamon powder if you like. Now, add peeled soybeans and add water as needed to blend them for 2-3 minutes into a paste. After the paste is done, set aside and take a cheesecloth so that you can squeeze

the milk through it. You can also use a mesh bag or mesh strainer.

Strain: Squeeze the milk through the mesh fabric by taking a spoon full of soy paste and squeezing out as much liquid as possible.

Cook: Pour the mixture into a big pot and add 2 cups of filtered water and stir. Bring to a boil on medium-high heat, stir and immediately bring it down to low heat so it does not burn. Keep on low heat for 2 minutes.

Let it cool and pour in a glass or store in the fridge for 3-4 days or store in a deep fridge for a longer time. Because of the low sugar content in soy milk, it can be used to make a variety of dishes. It can be used in desserts and even the main course. You can prepare any dish of your choice. Also, soy milk can be made into tofu which is a popular ingredient in some Asian dishes.

The writer is a fitness and nutrition coach/culinary expert.



PENNY WISE

NASREEN SATTAR
Former CEO, Standard Chartered Bank,
Afghanistan



Sharing financial information with your family



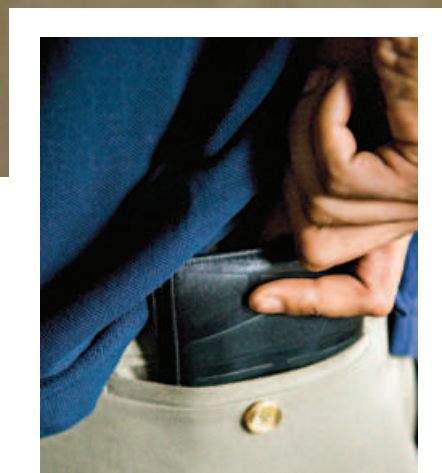
In our culture and social upbringing, we tend not to talk about finances, especially between spouses. In the traditional middle-class family, a wife will feel embarrassed to ask her husband about his bank matters and the husband will not think it important to share it with her.

In our conservative deshi society, this applies not only to the middle class but to all strata of society. Likewise, all too often, the husband assumes that his wife has disclosed everything too, which may not always be the case.

In this modern era, in most cases, both spouses are working members of a family, be it business or a 9 to 5 job, making it a dual income scenario. In this case, sharing of financial information should be from both parties.

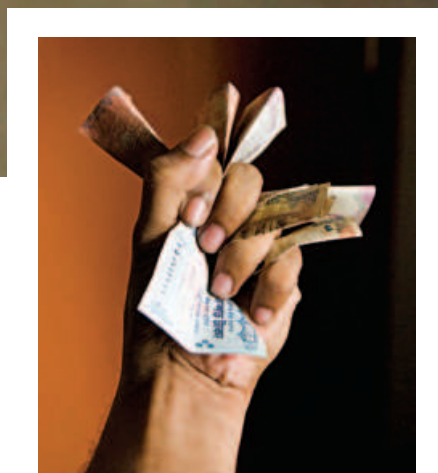
It is absolutely vital that spouses are aware of each other's financial matters. When I say financial matters, I do not mean bank accounts only, I mean all kinds of financial transactions, such as investments, bonds, mortgages, guarantees, pledges, or long-term commitments.

There are so many growing cases where the husband has passed away all of a sudden and the wife is left at the mercy of family members, clueless about the husband's assets and liabilities. When



matters come to light, outstanding loans show up and all too often, many banks will have no mercy to make things easy for a bereaved widow. There could be collateral to the loans but all details were left unknown and often, the spouse was not interested in knowing these details. The home you live in which you thought was your own, turns out to be mortgaged to a bank for another outstanding loan.

Sadly, the above happens all too often. Many a time, relatives come up with claims to property, money, etc. Having personally experienced the plight of close acquaintances, I strongly feel that a 'structured document' of all financial matters be drawn up with the help of a lawyer. Nothing should be concealed and the whole matter should be discussed in detail between the spouses and adult children, if any, ensuring a full



understanding and what actions one needs to take in the demise of the other.

Recently a close friend, a very successful entrepreneur, passed away suddenly. She was the single signatory to her business accounts and many of the properties were in her name only. Her husband found himself in a dire situation not knowing which were her banks, where were her lockers, which obviously had her expensive jewellery and important documents.

It should be remembered that this is important not only for the spouse's sake, but for the children too.

Just being a nominee of accounts is not sufficient, one has to be aware if there are lockers holding important documents, the spouse should be a joint signatory to the lockers and if a house or apartment is owned, the deed should be known to both parties and the formalities attached to it.

This is a cruel world when it comes to financial matters and once the grieving period is over, reality sets in. You need to get your succession certificate in order to enable you to access the bank accounts. You will find things are so much easier if all the information is known to you (and your children if any) from before — the 'structured document' I mentioned earlier will help you through.

Another particularly important piece of information that should be shared is password. Often, people (both spouses) may be concerned about allowing this information to be freely available, and if so, then these passwords should be written down and protected by lodging with a lawyer only to be opened after death. This will allow the survivor to access all available financial information much more easily.

From a personal point of view, I make it a point that when I travel alone, I leave a full disclosure of all my financial details with names of banks, contact persons, and my locker key number in a notebook which can be accessed by my husband and daughters. Of course, the legal documents are there, but the notebook makes it easier to find everything.

We can never assume who is going to pass away first, the husband or the wife!

#TRAVEL



5 tips to travel responsibly anywhere you go

Travelling is a rewarding experience that improves our lives, by allowing us to explore new places, and their perspectives and cultures. That is why it is very important to travel responsibly in a way that will protect the people and the environment of the destinations we will visit. Here are 5 things you should always bear in mind while travelling.

Adhere to local rules and regulations

Before travelling anywhere, make some time to research various essentials like the customs, laws and etiquette of the place you are visiting. In addition to following procedures like visa requirements, entry and exit procedures and such, be very mindful of respecting the local traditions and culture, like greetings, dress codes, gestures, and so on. Most importantly, always make sure to avoid any behaviour that will harm or offend the local populace.

Good hotel etiquettes

Always treat the hotel staff with utmost respect and courtesy when you are staying at a hotel. Be friendly and polite when interacting with them and always give honest appreciation for their services and efforts. And if they have served you well, do not feel hesitant to tip them generously. Make sure to not make any unreasonable demands from them.

Taking any products that are not complimentary

Staying at a hotel or a resort will give you access to certain amenities, and you should be mindful about not taking anything that was not offered as a complementary service to you. Things like towels, bathrobes, toiletries, pillows, blankets and such belong to the hotel and are provided to you for your convenience. Taking them is downright stealing and can result in hefty fines or even legal actions. Instead, you can check with the authority about what

is complimentary, and take those with you like shampoo sachets, tea bags, soap bars, and so on.

Be careful of scammers or malpractices

When travelling, always be on the lookout for scams and malpractices that will cost you money and can even cause harm to you. If you see any too-good-to-be-true food or travel deals in a place, make sure to do some research about it; check their ratings to see how authentic they are. It's a good idea to always check the menu and food prices before you start to order as in many tourist places, food pricing can be quite expensive. Avoid sharing any personal info with anyone that seems suspicious and in case of emergencies, get help from tourist police or relevant authorities.

Not littering and keeping the environment clean

As a responsible tourist, not littering and keeping the environment clean should be one of your top priorities, as this can help you preserve the beauty of any place you visit. It's a good idea to use a container or a reusable bag to store the trash or dispose of it properly in their designated bins. Go for eco-friendly products that can be reused and easily biodegradable. In case of any natural or historical sites, always refrain from doing things like spitting, defacing murals, or harming plants.

By Fedra Al Hossain

Photo: Collected

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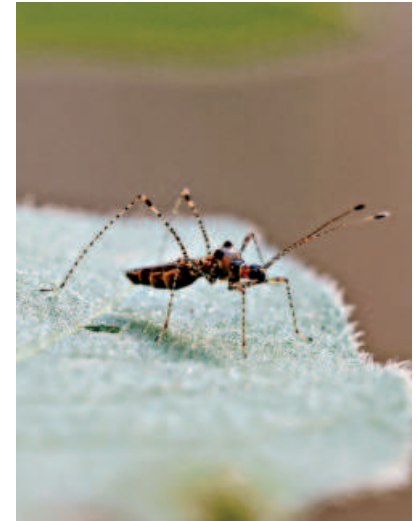
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Understanding the difference between dengue, flu, and COVID-19

BEAUTY DISSECTED

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With the onset of monsoon, torrential rains, and extreme hot weather, it looks like different viral diseases are making their rounds. Amongst them dengue seems to have hit us very hard this year. However, viral diseases like the flu and even COVID-19 are affecting people a lot. Children and the elderly in particular are likely to be more

susceptible. As the symptoms of all three seem to overlap, sometimes we are misled, which may delay in getting proper treatment.

Dengue seems to be the most common among the three. The symptoms are high temperature, even as high as 102/103 degrees, which does not settle easily, headache, sore throat and cough, rashes on the body along with body ache and fatigue. In some cases, diarrhoea is also present.

Treatment should start by giving the patient ample rest.

Simple cold sponging can help get the fever down. Warm water gargling helps with cough and sore throat. Patients should drink lots of fluid and maintain a soft diet. Observation of whether the patient's condition is worsening is very important.

In case of influenza, the symptoms are almost the same, but fever is not as high and there is persistent coughing with a runny nose and body ache. Patients may feel fatigued but not as much as dengue. Usually, the fever is easily managed and patients get well with symptomatic treatment.

Although some of us may not be aware, COVID infections are back and on the rise. Most of us are familiar with the symptoms of

COVID-19 and as you can see, they do coincide with the other viral infections. So, while observing the patient, we should keep in mind if there was any history of exposure. In these cases, usually fever is not so high and the patient does not become very ill. Patients may observe a loss in smell or taste along with experiencing fatigue.

Most of the times, the diseases can be treated at home by symptomatic treatment, but it is very important to monitor the patient's condition. This includes severity of symptoms, and reaction of the patient to the disease. If the patient gets worse after 2/3 days of fever, a specialist must be consulted. Tests for dengue and COVID-19 are usually advised. No treatment with medications like antibiotics should be started without consulting a doctor.

Although most people are aware and careful nowadays, sometimes we may miss some things, leading to complications. In all cases, taking basic care of patients along with observation is very important.

Photo: Collected

