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Tradition *in* my HEART

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PHOTO: LS ARCHIVE/SAZZAD IBNE SAYED

#FASHION & BEAUTY

M for magic
M for makeup!

It is 2 PM on a Tuesday afternoon, and I am elbow deep in a pan of loose, golden glitter. My entire family is either watching satellite TV or playing board games with no worries in the world. "Let them be," I tell myself, for I am busy experimenting with makeup.

While my normal going-out routine would be just a dab of lipstick and a streak of kajal, at this moment I am sensing great pleasure in taking art (read: makeup) to a higher level. I am spackling myself with a Hollywood-style strip of eyelash, piling on maroon lipstick, and sweeping on sparkly eyeshadows. While everything outside seems mundane, disheartening, and a tad bit frightening, I take refuge in something that I love — glamouring myself.

It's not just me; even celebrities have shared their experience on how makeup can be a mood booster. When nothing makes sense, dabbing red lipstick always helps, it seems. It soothes my wounded conscience and makes me feel completely in control of myself. As crazy as it may sound, this is true!

The science behind it

When you carefully put on makeup like a concealer, a bronzer, and a blush, you are caressing your face with your fingers. This releases oxytocin, which is a "happy hormone." The actual process of working with the hands can help reduce stress. Ask any makeup artist or painter—they will all agree.

Creativity

While there might be a set of rules for writing, painting, and applying makeup, anyone knows that the best art form is achieved when creativity flows freely. When experimenting with makeup, I do not plan anything ahead of time. I look at the wardrobe I am about to wear and allow myself to "wear" the mood I am in that day. Then my creative mind goes solo — the main idea behind makeup is to always feel more confident, empowered, and free.

There are no mistakes

On days when you feel like you have overdone your makeup or that kajal might have smeared more than you wanted it to, remind yourself that there are no set rulebooks and all the "mistakes" are only in your head.

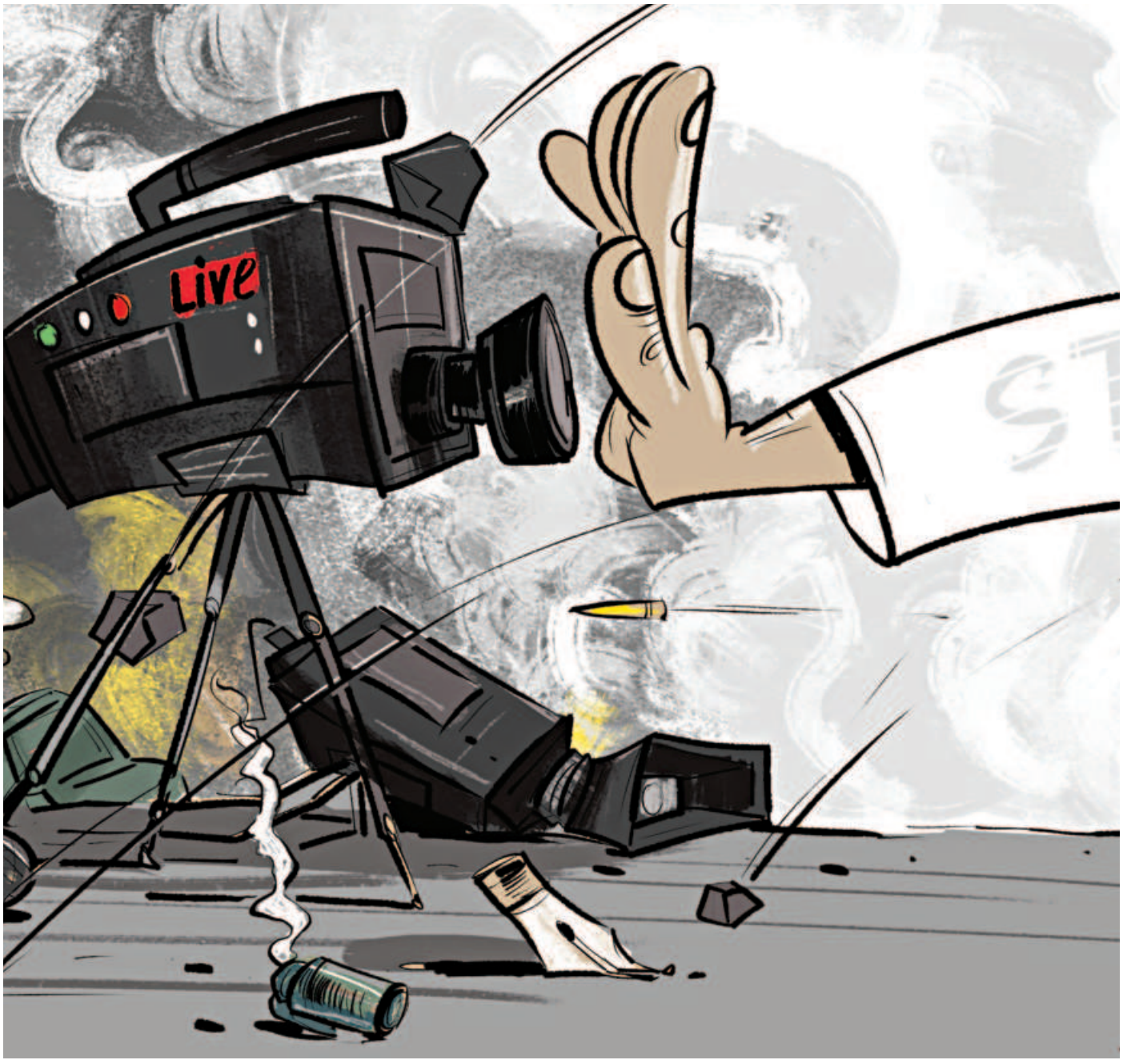
We have to learn to stop chasing perfection and instead enjoy the process of everything we do. Makeup has always been about fun. It has been about self-expression. Let's just keep it at that.

When the world is filled with 101 reasons to worry, let us not turn something so heartwarming into a complicated thing. Plus, there's always the added advantage of being able to start afresh when we do not like the end results!

By Fashion Police
Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad Ibne Sayed

#PERSPECTIVE

CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD
Journalism in times of crisis



Reading a newspaper in the morning while sipping a steaming cup of tea is a habit most of us have said farewell to. Without even realising it, we have witnessed a shift in how news is being consumed. Just like a change in our preference for morning beverages, from tea to coffee, our primary sources of information have also gone digital, a shift from conventional print media to the World Wide Web!

We are no longer just reading the newspaper, but also consuming information in the form of videos and reels. If the Internet made the world small, the advent of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc. has made it smaller still. They have made it convenient and more affordable to stay connected.

Journalism, too, has witnessed paradigm shifts. To adapt to the new model of news consumption, most traditional media outlets have focused on online content along with a print edition. News is now also being delivered through visual content published on YouTube and Facebook Live, along with the print edition of newspapers.

When all things are considered, social media included, it may seem, also comes as a boon to journalism, as it aids the dissemination of news to a wider audience. A single click on a Facebook post or video, and you are automatically taken to the dedicated website of the publisher.

There is, however, a catch to this apparent win-win situation.

In a world where information can move freely like never before, and there are no apparent gatekeepers to separate the false from the real, countless versions of the same information now flood our social media profiles. And, as news-related posts garner reactions in the form of likes and shares, a set of algorithms come into play — some news and videos perform better than others; a few even go 'viral.'

Every bit of information relevant to readers can be considered "news." Of course, some information is more worthy of publishing than others. The role of the media in informing, educating, and empowering the public with correct information is critical, and any seasoned journalist will say that there is an added point to this — a piece of news becomes publishable only when it serves the public interest.

In this context, fake news stands as an oxymoron, one that does not hold any credibility or serve any benefit to the general public. Disinformation, on the other hand, is information spread with the intent of deliberately confusing and manipulating the public. There is no doubt that weak journalism is also a prevalent menace, and click-bait to hide sloppy work is also a sad reality.

In the new battleground that is the digital space, media houses now not only compete to provide authentic news, but also compete to provide it first. However, all this only solidifies the importance of (quality) journalism that promises information that has passed the acid test of verification and authentication.

During the COVID-19 pandemic and also during the recent political upheaval, locked in the confines of our homes, panic-stricken people reached out to the world the only way they knew — through social media platforms that connected them.

The recent crisis once again reiterated the importance of a free and independent media. While the streets witnessed utter chaos, journalists were at the front lines, often risking their own lives, to provide information to the people.

Independent media houses were our primary sources of information at the time when rumours flew. As the future seemed bleak, by providing correct information, fast, credible news outlets served as watchdogs and helped us separate fact from fiction. And by doing so, countless lives were saved.

Our media landscape is vibrant and diverse. The traditional form of the profession is now being challenged, and increasingly, members of this fraternity have gone digital. During the recent student protests, the challenges for visual journalism were greater as they reported directly from the scene, while the mayhem was unleashed. There have been reports of journalists losing their lives while on duty; the number of injured newsmen is also high.

At a time when the general people have lost faith in institutions, it is expected that traditional media houses, which were once the vanguard of providing credible information, have also come under public scrutiny and widespread mistrust.

Laws, too, have been enacted to silence the voices of the free media. It is an open challenge, which journalists have wholeheartedly accepted and manoeuvring through the legal loopholes is now a part and parcel of the job.

This, however, cannot be done without public support. To reap the benefits of free media, consumers, too, have responsibilities. Rather than being impulsive, one must show restraint while using their social media profiles and handles.

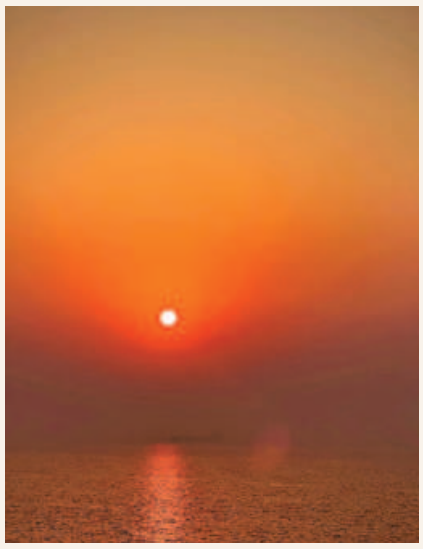
Not everything you see on Facebook is true, so make sure that before you react to a post, like it, or share it, you have the information verified. Countless news media outlets will not publish information, in print or the form of videos, that is not credible and will do the work for you. By supporting such institutions, you are not only well-informed but also doing a public service!

In every society, free media is a watchdog. It scrutinises the actions of the powers that be. This is more important in moments of crisis; it is the time when the media ensures that the response to the crisis is fair, transparent, and effective.

By Mannan Mashhur Zarif
Illustration: Biplob Chakraborty

#PERSPECTIVE

The many faces of freedom



Deeply personal and universally acknowledged at the same time, freedom is something chased by many yet fully grasped by surprisingly few. In Bangladesh, where the echoes of the Liberation War still pulsate strongly in the hearts of its people, freedom takes on various forms and meanings depending on whom you ask.

A university student, Sinha, sitting cross-legged in her bedroom, mulls over the idea, her textbooks sprawled beside her.

"Freedom to me means the power to choose – my career, my beliefs, my future. It's the ability to express myself without fear," she says. Her thoughts reflect a generation that values the liberty of choice and expression above many other freedoms.

For some, freedom is synonymous with independence. It's the exhilarating rush of making your own decisions, charting your course, and bearing the responsibility for the outcomes.

Independence as freedom shines brightly in the stories of young adults leaving home for the first time, entrepreneurs starting a new venture, or artists breaking away from traditional forms to express their unique vision.

For others, freedom is economic stability – to live without financial debt.

"I am old. I have chronic back and knee pain, and I still have to work at four to five households per day because of the debt I have to pay.

"If you ask me about freedom, I would say only financial stability can guarantee that for people like us," says Asha, who works as a house help in several homes each day and dreams of a day where her hard work translates into better living conditions.

Mahbub Ahmed, who runs a modest grocery shop, shares his own view on freedom that blends economic stability with a sense of community.

"To me, freedom is being able to run my shop without the fear of unfair taxes. It means having a stable economy where small businesses like mine can thrive and support the country," he explains.

Hence, at its core, freedom is the essence of our being the fundamental right to live, think, and act without undue constraint or oppression. Yet, despite its universal appeal, the way we experience and value freedom can be profoundly different, shaped by our personal histories, cultural backgrounds, and individual aspirations.

Take, for example, the story of Kamal, an artist specialising in rickshaw-painting.

He emphasises, "Freedom is the ability to celebrate and pass on our traditions without fear of them being overshadowed by global influences."

This form of freedom is about maintaining a distinct cultural identity amidst globalisation.

The evolution of freedom

The significance of freedom evolves over time and across life stages. The freedom cherished by a teenager – freedom from parental control or school rules – morphs into something more substantial in adulthood, where the stakes are higher, and the freedoms fought for include those of livelihood, family, and security.

As we age, our focus may shift again, perhaps towards intellectual freedom or the freedom to live out our remaining years on our own terms. The multifaceted nature of freedom illustrates that while the concept universally signifies a state of liberty – its practical implications are deeply personal and context-dependent.

Recognising and respecting the diverse meanings of freedom can help foster a more inclusive and supportive society where every individual has the opportunity to live freely and fully. By championing all forms of freedom – from economic and environmental to social and cultural –we pave the way for a more just and free society. This journey, while complex, is vital for the continued prosperity and unity of the nation.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: K Tanzeel Zaman / Collected

#PERSPECTIVE

Old-school texting makes a comeback: Rediscovering SMS and MMS

Dominated by instant messaging apps like WhatsApp, Messenger, Telegram, and Imo, traditional SMS (Short Messaging Service) seemed almost forgotten, relegated to the background of our digital lives. Yet, with the recent internet

crisis that left many without access to their favourite apps, the good old text message made a surprising comeback.

The shift back to SMS served as a reminder of its reliability.

"Honestly, who knew SMS could do emojis? I felt like I unearthed a hidden treasure in my phone," laughed Alpona Saha, who had not opened her SMS app in months. "I scrolled past a graveyard of old promotional texts and thought, 'Well, why not?' And just like that, SMS became a reliable ally," she added.

The shift back to SMS also highlighted its unexpected joy. Adding a personal twist to her rediscovered communication tool, Binti Sadiq injected some flair into her experience.

"I set my notification sound to a disco tune—it was my way of adding a little sparkle to the situation," she chuckled. Her story illustrated how customisable SMS can be, proving that old tech can still jam with the best of them.

Similarly, MMS (Multimedia Messaging Service) might sound like a relic from the flip phone era, but it's a surprisingly adept feature that enhances how we communicate. As the evolved version of SMS, MMS allows you to send images, audio files, video clips, and even large texts, transforming a basic message into a multimedia experience.

This revival of SMS and MMS during the digital drought showed that they are not just emergency backups but vibrant, capable messaging options.

As users like Saha explored these once-neglected features, she discovered that traditional text messaging could indeed compete with modern apps.

"Who would have thought? SMS still has a few tricks up its sleeve. It's like finding your old favourite sweater and realising it's back in style," she reflected.

This renewed interest in SMS and MMS highlighted their lasting utility and adaptability. It reminded us that in our fast-paced chase for the latest and greatest, there was still value in the basics!

So, as we navigated through tech disruptions, the trusty old text message stood ready, not just as a relic of the past but as a delightful and dependable part of our digital present.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Collected

Dignity, self-expression, *and* FASHION

As a child, I always thought there was only one way to dress — a polka-dot print saree, matching sleeveless blouse, bulky glass that takes up most of one's face, a chic bun, and a tiny dot at the centre of the forehead to complete the look.

Once I became an adult myself, the styles changed right before my eyes, and so I never actually dressed like the previous generation. My style changed with the times and the people around me.

Clothes give definition to a person; they accentuate one's personality. For me and most fashionistas I have known in life, fashion is not only about the runways; rather, it's about the city streets and the village markets. So, it is no surprise that the first thing I notice when I visit a new country is how people dress. It helps me form an impression of the place.

Any traveller will notice that people do not simply walk on the streets — they laugh, they hang out in groups, and they roam about. Interestingly, clothes play an essential part in all this — you will see youngsters in short A-line panjabis, women in shirt blouses, check sarees, kurtis, naturally dyed sarees, or just regular plain tees and faded jeans. The looks are not carefully crafted, but they look comfortable in their skin, and that reflects directly on their styling.

That's Bangladesh! To be more precise, that's Dhaka — a little boho and a little casual, but lots of comfort.

In the same streets, you would meet a flower girl or a lady balancing a basket of fruits on her head. Perhaps both of them will have perfectly oiled hair, a bright smile, tiny golden coloured earpieces, a nose pin, and sometimes a flower tucked into their coiled bun, and multi-coloured glass bangles adorning both hands.

The lady's saree, a cotton print, is finely tucked in to stay intact while she works. The little girl is probably wearing a printed frock; if there is a little boy in the frame, then he is most definitely wearing a floral shirt and colourful shorts. Both ladies look perfect in their attire. Both of them exude a unique sort of 'self-respect' that resembles or defines Dhaka.

The city we live in defines us. We become a part of it when we start dressing like the others who live in it with us. I take cues from all the people of Dhaka and the city itself.

So, a cute Bohemian look when I am out with my friends or the Bengali belle look, clad in a cotton saree, a touch of fresh flowers — be it wrapped around my wrists or tucked behind my ears — and simple jewellery. The no-fuss look is complete with lots of charisma!

By Fashion Police
Photo: LS Archive/Sazzad Ibne Sayed

DESHI MIX

SALINA PARVIN

6 taal recipes to impress your friends

Welcome to a culinary journey through the heart of Bangladesh. Today, we're exploring the versatile Taal, a quintessential summer fruit. From refreshing shorbot to creamy kheer, we are transforming this humble fruit into a variety of delectable dishes. We'll even bake an eggless Semolina Palm Cake and roll up some sweet Laddus. So, put on your apron, and let's dive into these tantalising recipes that will make your tastebuds dance with joy.

ICE APPLE SHORBOT (TAAL ER SASH ER SHORBOT)

Ingredients

5 ice apple/palm shell (taal er shaash)
2 tbsp sugar
2 glasses coconut water
1 glass water

Method

Peel the ice apples carefully, cut them into small cubes. Keep the ice apple juice in a glass. Take a jug. Add water, coconut water, ice apple juice and sugar. Stir well until sugar dissolves. Now, add the ice apple cubes, stir and shorbot is ready to serve. Serve it chilled.

ICE APPLE KHEER (TAAL ER SASH ER KHEER)

Ingredients

10 ice apple/palm shell (taal er shaash)
1 litre milk
½ cup condensed milk
2 green cardamom
2 tbsp sugar (optional)
1 tbsp chopped nuts

Method

Peel the skin of ice apple and chop into small pieces, set aside. Heat milk in a saucepan, once it comes to a boil, lower the flame and continue to cook until reduced to half. Now add condensed milk and cardamom powder to it. Mix well and cook for another 5 minutes in low flame. Add chopped ice apple pieces and cook for 1 minute. Remove from heat and let it cool

completely. Garnish with chopped nuts and serve chilled.

TAAL ER MALPUA

Ingredients

For the batter —
2 cups palm pulp
2 cups flour
1 cup semolina (suji)
2 cups milk
1 cup sugar
1 tsp baking powder
A pinch of salt
Oil for fry
For sugar syrup —
2 cups sugar
1½ cup water
2 cinnamon stick
2 green cardamom
1 tbsp chopped pistachios

Method

For the batter —

In a bowl, mix flour, semolina, sugar, salt, and baking powder. Add the pulp and mix well. Slowly start adding milk and stir to form a thick batter. Make sure there are no lumps in your batter. Cover and keep aside for half an hour.

For the sugar syrup —

Boil water in a pan. Add sugar, cinnamon, and cardamom. Cook until the sugar starts to become slightly sticky. Test it by cooling down a little syrup, it should be sticky but not have a 'one-string consistency'.

For making the malpua —

Heat oil in a pan. Add the batter to the oil with a ladle to form round shapes. Fry it until golden brown. Dip the fried discs in the sugar syrup until they have soaked enough syrup. Remove from the syrup. Allow it to cool. Garnish with chopped pistachios and serve.

PALM KALAKAND

Ingredients

6 cups milk
1 cup palm pulp
¾ cup sugar
A pinch of tartaric acid
1 tbsp chopped nuts

Method

Put the milk to boil on high heat. Add a pinch of tartaric acid. Boil the milk stirring continuously till it thickens.

Once the milk becomes thick, add sugar and palm pulp and let it boil. Continue to stir until the milk mixture becomes granular without actually curdling. Reduce the heat. Cook until mixture thickens further and bubbles form on surface. Pour into a greased tray. Decorate with chopped nuts. Let it cool. Cut into desired shapes and serve.

EGGLESS SEMOLINA PALM CAKE

Ingredients

1 cup palm pulp
1 cup fine semolina (suji)
1/3 cup melted butter
½ cup curd
1 tsp baking powder
½ tsp baking soda
¼ cup milk
1 tbsp lemon juice
Pinch of salt

Method

In a bowl, add palm pulp, sugar, butter and milk. Mix well and make a smooth paste out of it. Add semolina and mix everything well. Let it rest for at least 30 minutes, this will allow the semolina to absorb the moisture and will result in better texture of the cake. Now add baking powder, baking soda and curd to the milk mixture and mix well. Add more milk if needed to adjust the consistency. Lastly, add lemon juice and mix. Transfer the mixture into a greased and lined baking tin. Bake it into a preheated oven at 160° C for 35-40 minutes. When it is done, remove from oven, let it cool, cut into pieces and serve.

PALM LADDU

Ingredients

2 cup scraped fresh coconut
2 cup palm pulp
1½ cup dry roasted press rice powder
2 cup sugar
½ cup mixed nut
2 tbsp palm oil

Method

Heat palm oil in a non-stick pan. Add scraped coconut, palm pulp and sugar, cook for 10 minutes. When the water dries up, add 1 cup roasted pressed rice powder and condensed milk to it. Mix well and cook until it turns sticky and you can make laddu from the mixture. Now add mixed nuts and turn off heat. Mix continuously for 2-3 minutes. Transfer the prepared mixture in a bowl and set aside to cool. Divide the prepared mixture into equal portions, shape them into laddus. Coat the laddus in remaining roasted, press-rice powder. Store or serve.

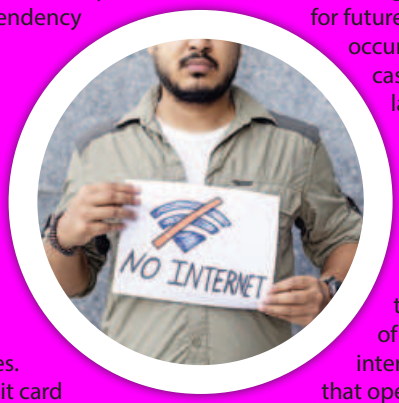
By Salina Parvin
Photo: LS Archive/Sazzad Ibne Sayed

#PERSPECTIVE

Can we survive without the Internet?

For five days, we experienced a stark return to yesteryear, where tasks we now consider mundane required significant time and effort. The internet has woven itself into the fabric of our lives to such an extent that its absence felt paralysing.

Paying utility bills, once a matter of a few swipes on a screen, now demanded standing in long queues with cash in hand, surrounded by others who, like us, feared imminent power cuts. This comparison to the past starkly highlights how our dependency on the internet has escalated.



Digital payments and online banking, the backbones of modern convenience, vanished in an instant. Without online access, our cash became inaccessible, turning everyday transactions into logistical nightmares. The inability to pay credit card bills or recharge phone minutes without physically visiting banks or service providers brought an unexpected level of disruption.

Entertainment, too, took a significant hit. Streaming services, our modern sources of endless content, ceased to function. We were left with basic cable or, for the more nostalgic, radio. Booking flights, transportation tickets, or hotel reservations became impossible, reminiscent of an era when such tasks required extensive planning and travel agency visits.

The blackout did not just disrupt personal convenience; it brought corporate and operational systems to a halt. Simple communication, from flight operations to corporate management, crumbled like a house of cards. ATM booths, often our financial lifelines, were mostly out of order. E-commerce platforms, ride-sharing apps, and food delivery services turned into nothing more than colourful icons on our screens, devoid of function.

In the wake of this experience, many are reconsidering their preparedness for future incidences, if they occur. Thoughts of keeping cash at home, reinstalling landlines, and purchasing radios are becoming common. These measures, though somewhat comforting, highlight our vulnerability and the immense challenge of reverting to pre-internet methods in a world that operates at lightning speed.

However, amidst the chaos, a silver lining appeared. Families found themselves spending more time together, rekindling bonds, and rediscovering hobbies long forgotten. While this is a heartening outcome, it begs the question: is it enough to outweigh the broader impact of the collapse of the internet?

This lack of online access has shown us how helpless, desperate, and stuck we can feel without our digital lifelines. It forced us to confront the fragility of our modern conveniences and question our preparedness for future disruptions. As we move forward, it is crucial to reflect on our dependency and find a balance that ensures we are not entirely incapacitated by such events.

In Dhaka, and indeed across the nation, days without the internet have been a sobering reminder of how integral it has become to our lives. The challenge now is to learn from this experience and prepare ourselves better so that the next time, we are not left in the dark.

By K Tanzeel Zaman
Photo: Shahrear Kabir Heemel

#LIFEHACKS

Where is my dictionary?

The recent internet blackout in Bangladesh put a spotlight on an often-forgotten tool: the dictionary. For writers and anyone who relies on crafting basic-level English communications, the lack of digital access was a stark reminder of our dependency on the internet.

Remember the days when looking up a word meant reaching for a hefty dictionary, flipping through its pages, and carefully navigating the alphabet? It was a tedious but a familiar process. The recent events in Bangladesh forced us to revisit this old method, a stark contrast to the instant results we are used to with digital tools.

In our smartphone-dominated lives, we have grown used to the instant gratification of online dictionaries and search engines that can give you the answers with the whole nine yards. Need to look up a word? Just type or speak into your smartphone, and voilà! The answer is there with synonyms and antonyms alike in case you need it.

However, with the seemingly bottomless well of knowledge we call the internet drying up, we were forced to take off our tinted glasses that buried the hefty physical dictionaries that used to occupy a significant space on our bookshelves, evoking a sense of nostalgia for a simpler time.

While internet was unavailable, the dictionary emerged as a symbol of the patience and the effort that learning and writing once demanded. It was a respectful nod to the past, reminding us that while technology offers speed and convenience, some old-fashioned tools still hold immense value.

In Dhaka, as in many places, we found ourselves reconsidering the importance of keeping a dictionary at hand. The weight of the book, both in terms of its physical heft and its informational value, became apparent once more. It served as a reminder that while technology advances rapidly, some tools remain timeless in their utility.

By K Tanzeel Zaman
Photo: Shahrear Kabir Heemel

HOROSCOPE

ARIES
(MAR. 21-APR. 20)

Clear your schedule for something might happen. Listen to advice coming from good friends. Be nice to your partner. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

TAURUS
(APR. 21-MAY 21)

Interact with all kinds of people. Your love life will be baffling. Don't spend too much this week. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

GEMINI
(MAY 22-JUN. 21)

Co-workers may deceive you. Don't be so trusting. Pleasure trips will be relaxing. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

CANCER
(JUN. 22-JUL. 22)

Offer support instead of conflict. Someone is out to smear your reputation. Changes could be overwhelming. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

LEO
(JUL. 23-AUG. 22)

Spend time with your partner. Compromise a little. Make changes that will enhance your reputation. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

VIRGO
(AUG. 23-SEP. 23)

Things will naturally fall into place. Make changes at home. Don't let anyone take credit for your work. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

LIBRA
(SEP. 24-OCT. 23)

Don't get involved in joint financial ventures. Don't let your partner rile you up. Make time for yourself. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

SCORPIO
(OCT. 24-NOV. 21)

Seek out help if you need it. Unexpected bills will be difficult to deal with. Don't get upset over trivial matters. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

SAGITTARIUS
(NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

Try not to stick out. Embrace new methods of work. Acquire information that will be beneficial in your chosen field. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

CAPRICORN
(DEC. 22-JAN. 20)

Pamper your partner this week. Play smart and you can make it big. Set yourself a strict budget. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

AQUARIUS
(JAN. 21-FEB. 19)

Deal with the needs of your family. Be diplomatic but stern regarding sensitive disputes. Your partner could be tiresome this week. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday..

PISCES
(FEB. 20-MAR. 20)

Make some changes at work. Make plans to travel this week. Help your family out with problems. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

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#PERSPECTIVE

RISING FROM THE ASHES

Can Dhaka move on for good?

The mayhem that swept over the nation is still alive and vivid in our memories. The harrowing violence that has been carried out will forever remain imprinted in our hearts. Hence the question that haunts us all: after what has happened, can we ever get over this?

It is a legit question. A few days ago, I watched and read news in aghast, seeing Dhaka — the city dearest to my heart — go up in flames. Attacks on expressway toll plaza and metro rail station, for me, were the breaking point, as the two are embodiments of a city of progress and hope.

Moreover, we have all witnessed — in person when commuting during curfew breaks and also on the news — the immediate aftermath, such as burned up vehicles with just their bare frames remaining.

So, the natural question obviously is, can Dhaka ever move on? It is not just about the financial cost or the logistics of rebuilding or reinstalling infrastructure. It goes much beyond that, involving the very psyche of the city.

To answer this, one thing that can be kept in mind is Dhaka's enduring and resilient personality. It is much like a living organism. A rude and greedy beast our city may be, but nevertheless, one that also has the power to heal itself.

How does it do so? Well, that's harder to explain, but if I do make an attempt to elaborate, the rationale would lie on one hand in the dreams and ambitions of the people of this metropolis and, on the other, in its hardened character.

Dhaka is the "jadur shohor" where people want to make the best for themselves, at least in terms of materialistic or worldly achievements. We always expect — nay, demand — the city to give us ways to wealth and fortune. And in reality, despite all its problems, the city offers them to those who are ambitious, bold, and smart. It is not hard to imagine that this attribute of our capital will continue in order to feed the ambitions of city dwellers.

Soon enough, the wheels of the economy will regain momentum, and dreams and desires will take over once again, hence bringing back the Dhaka we all know of. The toughened and rather unsentimental quality of this city — though not always a good thing — shall work here as a necessary evil and help us move on (but hopefully with due justice served).

Is it too soon for so much optimism, though? Possibly, but being a history buff who is obsessed with Dhaka, I am acutely aware of the tragedies, anarchies, and catastrophes our city suffered in the distant and near past, and how the capital has always turned around.

What is the last good memory you have of a "normal" Dhaka before chaos broke out? Where did you leave things? May be a fun night out with friends at your favourite burger joint or a project at the office you were excitedly planning? Whatever that may be, you can pick it up from there, and our city — this hungry, impatient, peculiar creature — will carry you forward.

To exemplify, the last good memory I have was at Dhaka University sometime before the student protests escalated.

I remember seeing a large and splendid Buddha statue on the premises of Jagannath Hall, as well as the iconic Aparajeo Bangla in front of Kala Bhaban. Little did I know that the situation around these monuments was going to turn into a whirlwind in the coming days!

I shall restart my life in Dhaka by drawing inspiration from both: The Buddha at the campus now reminds me that while suffering may be a part of life, we still ought to strive for nirvana, or at least a slice of peace and happiness. Meanwhile, the trio that is Aparajeo Bangla assures me of the invincible nature of our country and its people.

I believe that the wounds of this city will surely heal, although a deep scar will remain forever.

Meanwhile, as we count losses — at the peak of which is the irreversible cost of many human lives — we all know of the loose ends and unresolved issues that need to be fixed.

For the unresolved, I can offer an admittedly not-so-satisfying answer, a quote that I read in a history book, Glimpses of Old Dhaka, a quote that nonetheless gives hope: "Fear not if the pearls are scattered unstrung; they only await to be restrung in better order."

By M H Haider
Photo: Sheikh Enamul Haq