

#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 paralyzing.

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.

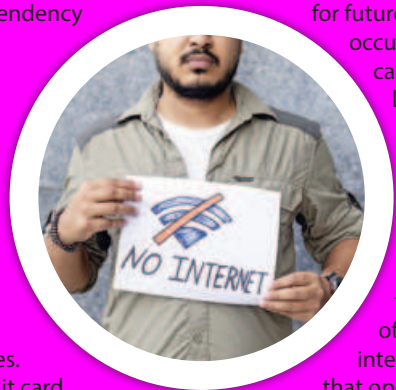
Entertainment, too, took a significant hit. Streaming services, our modern sources of endless content, ceased to function. We were left with basic cable or, for the more nostalgic, radio. Booking flights, transportation tickets, or hotel reservations became impossible, reminiscent of an era when such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

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Photo: Shahrear Kabir Heemel

