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Game Changers

SILENT REVOLUTION P2
MICRO-LIBRARY AT DHANMONDI



BEST OF THE BEST P11
TEHARI PLACES IN TOWN



A TEA BREAK P12
MINGLING OVER A CUP

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

IN FRAME: RITU PORNA CHAKMA, SABINA KHATUN, JAHANARA ALAM, NAHIDA AKTAR

#REVIEW



Micro-library in Dhanmondi Lake Park: A reading revolution in the making

In an era of dopamine-driven social media scrolls, reading a book underneath a tree can seem like a far-fetched dream. Moreover, navigating the harsh city life leaves us very little time off. Braving the traffic to reach a tranquil library and indulging in the simple pleasure of reading has become a luxury for city dwellers. Zakia Rayhana Rupa, a resident of Dhanmondi found a way to bridge this gap by setting up a micro-library at Dhanmondi Lake Park.

“When I learned from a friend about little free libraries in Germany—where bookshelves are placed in public parks for people to read, and donate books, I thought, why not do the same here in Bangladesh?” said the 44-year-old literary buff, who also advocates for mental health and healthy parenting.



True to her proactive nature, Rupa installed her first micro-library. A wooden bookcase atop a linear stand was installed at Road 7, Dhanmondi Lake Park.

She stocked the cabinet with a few books by her favourite author, Mohiuddin Mohammad and wrote down one simple rule: “Read books from here and return them after reading.”

Soon, curious minds were spotted by the charming setup, flipping through pages, and enjoying a quiet pastime amidst the bustling city.

“The serene lake and lush green attract people to this park from all walks of life, so this made the perfect spot,” Rupa explains.

“After the first bookstand, I set up three more bookcases,” she adds.

These bookcases are integrated with trees as if little bird nests, and located by the

benches— turning the sites into intimate reading stations.

Rupa’s initiative was motivated by a strong faith in people’s love for reading, as she states— “People want to read; they only need access to quality books and a peaceful environment.”

She addresses the rising book costs in an economy already burdening everyday lives. Thus, the micro-library is free and the goal is to make books more available to readers.

The ripple effect of the micro-library

venture is evident. It is receiving funds and a wide range of books from literary aficionados. Six more bookcases are already on the way to be installed at Lake Park.

Rupa’s determination is unshaken and she aims to expand her micro-libraries hoping that the venture will spread to remote areas of the country, fostering intellectual civic spaces and community spirit.

By Tasmiah Rahman

Photo: Courtesy







ALOE VERA ও COCOA BUTTER সমৃদ্ধ

Beautina SKIN LOTION

১টি ম্যান্ডালিনা সোপ ফ্রী

HEALTHY ত্বকে আত্মবিশ্বাসী আমি। আর আপনি?

*বিউটিনা বডি লোশন ২০০মিলিঃ এর সাথে স্যান্ডালিনা সোপ ৭৫ গ্রাম এবং বিউটিনা বডি লোশন ১০০মিলিঃ এর সাথে স্যান্ডালিনা সোপ ৫০ গ্রাম ফ্রী।

KOHINOOR CHEMICAL

ACI Pure Fortified Rice

A Health Revolution for Bangladesh

The ACI Group, one of Bangladesh's most diversified and innovative conglomerates, has long been a leader in improving lives through its pharmaceuticals, consumer goods, agribusiness, and retail ventures. Keeping up its streak of health and taste, this popular conglomerate has stepped up once again.



Working with the technical support of the World Food Programme (WFP), ACI is the first to introduce fortified rice commercially in the country, which also reflects the company's social responsibility towards consumers and the efforts to make a positive impact on public health. With health awareness on the rise now, ACI Pure Fortified Rice gives us the perfect solution to switch to healthier rice without giving it up. So what do we know about fortified rice? Fortified rice is regular rice that has been enhanced with essential vitamins

and minerals to make it more nutritious. It is created by adding nutrients like Vitamin A, iron, folic acid, zinc, and vitamin B to the grains, which are not found in white rice. Despite this added nutrition, fortified rice looks, cooks, and tastes exactly like the rice we are used to eating, making it a very easy and familiar shift in our diet.

Designed to combat nutritional deficiencies, this product is especially beneficial for all.

For children, fortified rice can be nothing short of transformative. It is known to improve learning and memory by providing nutrients that help cognitive growth, setting the stage for a more capable and brighter generation in the future. Moreover, it targets stunted growth which usually is a problem among the young population.

Perhaps, the most significant impact of fortified rice can be seen in maternal health. Pregnancy is a critical period in a woman's life, and the lack of proper nutrition during this time can lead to severe complications for both the mother and the baby. Fortified rice, enriched with folic acid and other essential nutrients, reduces the risk of birth defects and promotes better maternal health. This ensures not only a safer pregnancy but also a healthier baby, setting the stage for a strong start to life.

According to WHO (2016), 40% of women of reproductive age suffer from

anaemia, while the National Micronutrient Survey (2011–2012) revealed 57% have zinc deficiency. A study assessed the impact of fortified rice (FFR) in addressing these deficiencies among women in vulnerable groups across five districts. Over 12 months in 2013, participants received 30 kg of FFR or non-FFR monthly. Anaemia in the FFR group decreased by 4.8%, while it increased by 6.7% in the non-FFR group. The findings highlight fortified rice's potential to improve public health outcomes.

In studies published by Cambridge University, results showed that consumption of fortified rice in Vietnam increased iron intake by 41%, zinc by 16%, and folic acid by 34%, demonstrating its potential to improve public health outcomes in regions dependent on rice as a staple food.

Being the first of its kind in Bangladesh, ACI's launch of fortified rice marks a revolutionary success. It has shown potential to transform public health and actively battling against the nationwide deficiency of vital nutrients by adding them to the country's staple food. Fortified rice not only fixes serious nutritional deficiencies but also establishes a new standard for easily accessible, daily cures to enhance millions of people's health and well-being.

By Nusrath Jahan



FIRST COMMERCIAL FORTIFIED RICE IN BANGLADESH

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EMPOWERING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN BANGLADESH

Overcoming Challenges with EBL Women Banking Portal

In Bangladesh, women have long been the backbone of households, communities, and the economy, whether as homemakers, professionals, or entrepreneurs. Women-led enterprises now make up nearly 8 per cent of the country's businesses, showcasing their potential to reshape the economic landscape. However, barriers like limited access to financial services, inadequate entrepreneurial training, and societal norms often hinder their growth. EBL Women Banking Portal, launched by Eastern Bank PLC, is a game-changing platform designed to address these challenges and unlock opportunities for women in business.

The Rise of Women Entrepreneurs in Bangladesh

The journey of women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh is inspiring yet fraught with obstacles. A recent survey shows that over 70 per cent of women entrepreneurs struggle with accessing finance, and more than 60 per cent face difficulties in managing and scaling their businesses due to a lack of training and support. Women-owned SMEs contribute significantly to the national economy, yet many remain unregistered or underfunded, limiting their potential to thrive in competitive markets.

Despite these hurdles, initiatives from EBL Women Banking are paving the way for their empowerment by integrating financial solutions with training and business development resources.

Introducing the EBL Women Banking Portal

EBL Women Banking has been a pioneer in creating a tailored ecosystem for women of all economic backgrounds. The recently launched **EBL Women Banking Portal** is an exclusive, one-stop digital platform that equips women with tools and resources to help them start, grow, and sustain their businesses. From securing loans to accessing business training, the portal offers everything a woman entrepreneur needs to succeed—all from the comfort of her home.

How the Portal Addresses Key Challenges

Simplified Business Documentation
Navigating bureaucratic hurdles can be daunting for many women entrepreneurs. The portal offers **Business Development Services** at preferential fees, enabling users



to prepare formal business documents with expert assistance. This service ensures that women can focus on their business ambitions without being bogged down by paperwork.

Entrepreneurial Education at Your Fingertips

Recognising the need for business

knowledge, the portal provides:

- **Entrepreneurship Development 101 Certification:** A series of 18 video lessons covering business management, entrepreneurship fundamentals, and digital marketing. Participants receive a certificate upon completion, boosting their confidence and credentials.
- **Business Management Course:** A comprehensive, self-paced program covering essential topics like cost management, time management, and marketing strategies, all taught in Bangla for accessibility.
- **Financial Literacy Training:** Developed in collaboration with Bangladesh Bank and ADB, this module enhances financial skills, helping women entrepreneurs make informed decisions.

Scaling Businesses with 'Joyee'

For women entrepreneurs with at least one year of business experience, the **'Joyee' program**, offers in-depth training and mentorship. This initiative is designed to help businesses evolve into sustainable ventures by strengthening

entrepreneurial capabilities and improving creditworthiness.

Convenient Banking Services

Banking is made easy through the portal, offering services like:

- Secured **loan applications** to access funds quickly.
- **Online account opening** for hassle-free banking.
- **DPS (Deposit Pension Scheme)** options to encourage savings and financial security.

The EBL Commitment to Economic Empowerment

Eastern Bank PLC has been a trailblazer in providing women-friendly banking solutions. Through this innovative portal, EBL aims to bridge the gender gap in entrepreneurship and finance, contributing to the larger vision of economic empowerment for women in Bangladesh.

A Call to Action for Women Entrepreneurs

If you are a homemaker with a business idea, a professional looking to start a side hustle, or an entrepreneur seeking to scale your enterprise, EBL Women Banking Portal is your partner in progress. Embrace the tools and training you need to overcome challenges, grow your business, and achieve your dreams.

Start your journey today. Visit the **EBL Women Banking Portal** and take the first step toward a brighter, empowered future.

Photo: Courtesy




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#FYI

Breaking Barriers: Women athletes leading the fight for change

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence is an international campaign to end violence against women and girls, observed annually from November 25 (International Day

for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) to December 10 (Human Rights Day). It was first launched in 1991 by the Women's Global Leadership Institute and is now supported by the United Nations,

governments, NGOs, and individuals worldwide.

This year, a part of the campaign, **Star Lifestyle** speaks to some of the women athletes of Bangladesh who are not only

striving for glory in the world of sports but are also challenging societal norms and becoming role models for countless young girls across the country.

“I never thought I would be MVP”

-- RITU PORNA CHAKMA

Ritu Porna Chakma from Rangamati's Kawkhali upazila came from a humble beginning. Although she first kicked a football when she was just in class three, it was later on that she was able to develop a passion for the game.

“The first time I kicked a football in 2012, I almost broke my toe,” Chakma chuckled, as she reminisced about the early days. “Back then I had no such dream of becoming a football player. I didn't even know girls could have international teams! To me, it was a game that I enjoyed playing a lot.”

Ritu Porna was a Mogachhari Government Primary School student, which has already become popular for producing top-notch athletes. There, under the guidance of head teacher, Birsan Chakma, Ritu's perspective of the game began changing.

“It began with the Bangamata Fazilatunnesa Cup. It was compulsory for us to participate. Birsan Chakma sir included me in that team for the tournament in 2012 and until 2015, I played every year,” said Chakma while recounting her formative years.

Then, tragedy struck. Ritu's father, the sole bread earner of their family passed away and life, as she knew it, came to a standstill.

“We're four sisters and one brother. We come from a very poor family and after the death of my father, everything stopped – my studies, my football, everything,” she said with a heavy voice. That was when Birsan, once again, lifted Ritu. “He took responsibility for everything to ensure I don't stop playing football.”

Coupled with her teacher's efforts was the undying support of her

family, which ultimately led Ritu to join the national team in 2017 for the SAFF U-15 Championship.

“The sole reason I was able to come this far was my family's support, especially my mother and my didi [elder sister]. Despite all odds, they always prioritised my needs, my dreams, and my aspirations. My career as a footballer was only possible because of them.

“However, it was difficult for my family as well. Society tried in

RITU PORNA CHAKMA

Age: 20

Debut: 2021

Position: Attacking midfielder

Best performance: Scored the winning goal against Nepal in the SAFF Women's Championship 2024 final in Kathmandu

Courtesy: TDS Sports Desk

many ways to hold me back. Our neighbours would say negative things to my family but my mother and sister never let those words even reach my ears,” she added, a hint of defiance in her tone.

With those women standing behind her like a wall, no obstacle could reach Ritu as she soared her way to the top.

Ritu Porna's performance in the final match against Nepal in the SAFF-2024 Championship grabbed headlines not only in the country but also abroad. It

was enough to prompt talks among European clubs to recruit the 20-year-old prodigy.

“I never thought I would be the most valuable player [SAFF-2024]. It's a great achievement for me. My family and I are very proud. I can't put into words how it feels,” Ritu Porna Chakma mentioned with pride.



“Every player has one person who pushed them”

-- SABINA KHATUN

Sabina Khatun's venture into the world of sports did not begin with football.

“Every player, I believe, has this one person who pushed them forward to reach their fullest potential. For me, that person was my coach at Satkhira's Nobarun Girl's School, Akbar sir. He made me take part in everything – handball, football, cricket, kabaddi, 100-metre sprint, whatever there was to play!” she exclaimed.

After seeing her excel in one sport after another, coach Akbar one day decided to meet Sabina's family.

“I was always playing. Even when he came to my house to meet my parents and four sisters, I was outside running around with the boys of the neighbourhood,” Khatun laughed.

Akbar informed her parents of her potential. And Sabina's parents and eldest sister agreed with him.

“For women in this country, it's impossible to play sports professionally if they don't have their family by their side. That support from home is imperative,” Sabina voiced, her tone growing serious.

Although female sportspersons have more freedom now, there were always struggles in the early days.

She recounted, “Our coach had to endure a lot. The entire neighbourhood was against him for training girls in sports. But he did not let that affect any of us. Sometimes, when all the girls sit and share stories of the past, it makes me laugh. They say things like, ‘We used to try and run away but our coach would drag us back onto the field for training. We were young and didn't understand why.’”

It is those coaches and their perseverance that ultimately helped these girls stand on their own two feet and kick the ball!

“I never aimed to be where I am right now. I just wanted to play football, that's all. When I was announced as the best player of the team in the 2010 SAFF Championship, I was unaware that my name was even being announced, it was that unexpected for me,” she admitted. “Back then,

there were no facilities and barely any payments for us. Even until 2015-16, there was no financial support. Those of us who stuck through did so out of pure passion for the game and the struggles we have overcome that brought us this far, that brought me this far.”

When Sabina, now captain of the women's team, compared her past to her present, she found it to be vastly different.

“Before, we would just play. But now, if you notice, almost every player in our team is the breadwinner of their family. Ritu, me, and even our youngest player, Sagorika — we take our family's responsibility. I think this fact itself is such an inspiration that from such a young age we can support our families. And that is why our families know the importance of football in our lives,” Sabina concluded.

SABINA KHATUN

Age: 31

Debut: 2010

Position: Forward

Best performance: Hat-trick in a 6-0 win against Pakistan in SAFF Women's Championship 2022 in Kathmandu

Courtesy: TDS Sports Desk





#WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Celebrating the Women Who Redefined Bangladesh Sports

INSPIRING TALES OF STRUGGLE, RESILIENCE, AND TRIUMPH

Over the years, Bangladesh's women have grabbed headlines in the world of sports. In 2018, the women's cricket team clinched the Asia Cup, while the women's football team brought home two consecutive SAFF championships (2022-2024). Throughout their journeys, they had to face myriad obstacles and struggles but despite those, they fought on out of sheer passion and the love for their games.

Star Lifestyle caught up with four such female sportspeople who have had their impacts on Bangladesh's upward journey in global sports.

"It wasn't easy," said Sabina Khatun, captain of the Bangladesh women's football team, when asked about this year's SAFF Championship victory. "Of course, it meant a lot. We feel great, all victories bring joy. To win twice in a row means a lot. But last year, we were able to play with a lot of freedom. This year, there were many challenges for us both on and off the field."

Despite not getting paid for two months by the then federation, the girls took to the Dasharath Rangasala Stadium in Kathmandu knowing they would not give up the title. They have not yet received their payments for the four matches they played in the championship.

Ritu Porna Chakma, who was given this year's Most Valuable Player award said, "Almost all the other teams that took part in

the tournament were able to play warm-up matches with each other. We didn't get that chance. Most of us girls felt neglected. I guess that's where a sense of stubbornness came from, which led us to victory."

Sabina chimed in, "Our group too was challenging, with Pakistan and India. In South Asia, India are always a threat to any opponent. We had 200 per cent pressure but we played with all we had and we proved ourselves."

The last big achievement on an international level by the Bangladesh women's cricket team, or Bangladesh cricket as a whole, was winning the 2018 Asia Cup. But since then, the team has been on a relatively downward slope.

Jahanara Alam, who has been representing the Bangladesh team since its inception in 2007, has come back to the squad after a year-long break for an ODI series against Ireland.

When it comes to holding on to success on an international level, she believes ups and downs are inevitable. "This is sports, you cannot expect the graph to keep going upwards."

"But when we play well, whether it's the men's team or women's team, it's a win for all of Bangladesh cricket. Maybe in the World Cups, we didn't win many matches, but that only pushes us further to do better next time."

"The international platform is always highly competitive. And still, we managed to bring home the Asia Cup in 2018. So, ups and downs will always be there. What matters is that we keep a positive mindset," Alam said.

Vice-captain of the women's team and the first Bangladeshi woman to ever become "ICC Player of the Month", Nahida Aktar believes teamwork is key in international matches.

Jahanara said, "We showed what we can do when we perform like a compact team in 2018. Each player made impactful contributions in their own way and we all had each other's backs. This is what worked for us."

Bangladesh vs the World

Asked what factors need improvement when compared to other international women's teams, Sabina said, "The discipline and structure needed for an athlete is where we fall behind."

"If you compare us even with just Asian teams, we don't have even 10 per cent [of the discipline] they have. The lifestyle required to be at the top of our game is missing and that is something the authorities concerned need to ensure."

For an athlete to reach their fullest potential, there needs to be a proper diet, routine, practice facilities, and medical care.

"We don't have a guideline for such things. It's necessary to meet each player's individual and specific requirements to make sure they are at their best when on the field. We are all different physically, technically and tactically, and so we each have separate needs which need to be met."

Meanwhile, Jahanara thinks the lack of experience is what is holding her team back.

"We need more matches with teams that are currently dominating international cricket. The style of play of teams like Australia, England, South Africa, remains unknown to us as we don't get to play bilateral or home or away series with them. We need to learn to adjust to the environments and pitches of countries outside of South Asia."

Sabina also thinks more teams coming to Bangladesh will help them up their game.

"We need competitive matches at the Asian level. Sometimes, it's inevitable we will lose. But I think whether we concede 10 or even 20 goals, we will come off the field learning a lot."

Authorities' responsibility

"I must mention, with regard to girls' football, not the boys', the impact that Kazi Salahuddin sir [former president of the Bangladesh Football Federation] had. There're very few countries in Asia who have a year-long camp for girls. He kept

60-70 of us together, ensured our training and preparation for several age-level games, which was very appreciable.

"We just got a new committee and president and it would be unfair to expect so much right now, especially as the change came after 15 [16] years. However, I hope the trends left behind by Salahuddin sir continue and are further advanced. I hope they [the new committee of the federation] work on our facilities and increase opportunities to play more matches. I am certain they have good plans for us."

Left-arm spinner Nahida believes the Bangladesh Cricket Board, who in the past have been heavily criticised for treatment of the women's team, has improved in many aspects and has been supportive.

"But only when we have proper viewership, will we be granted improved facilities. Our board and president too are new, so we need to give them time to give us the support we need. The better we play, the more support we get from the board. Simple as that."

Men vs Women

As the women's teams have successfully been bringing accolades back home, the men's performances at the international level have been facing serious criticism.

The women, however, think it is unfair. Sabina says, "The boys don't deserve it. They have to face more flak because people say things like 'If the girls can do it, why can't you?'"

At an individual level, the captain believes all players must feel the responsibility of bringing achievements to the country.



"Sports is entertainment. Nobody wants to sit in front of the television for hours only to see us lose. We need to feel the responsibility of making our game worth their while."

Ritu Porna finds negative criticism can sometimes be very aggravating.

"When we play well, people make nice

comments and it works like motivation for us. But one bad game, and they say things that can be quite unbearable."

After drawing the first match against Pakistan in this year's SAFF championship, Ritu Porna received messages like "Give up football and become a TikToker instead."

"I couldn't take it. It was very hurtful."



Comments like this won't help us. Whether the boy's team or the girl's team, we need your [the audience's] support and encouragement. Only that will help us get better with each match."

Our cricketers agree. Vice-captain Nahida said, "I don't like this comparison. Everyone has bad days and good days. Ultimately, we all are representing Bangladesh."

Jahanara said it is because of the men's team that the women's one even exists. "How did women's cricket team even come about in this country? It was thanks to the men's team. I don't appreciate belittling them because it's because of them that we are getting the chance to play cricket. The ICC trophy won in 1997 by the men's team is the foundation on which the men's and women's cricket teams stand."

She also highlighted the differences between the sexes in terms of physicality. "We have to agree there is a difference in the physicality of men and women. As a matter of fact, the balls we bowl with are made slightly smaller because our hands are comparatively smaller. Our boundaries are also a little closer. But the difference is so minimal that I don't think there needs to be any comparison. We all play to make the people of the country happy."

"Everyone has the right to criticise and the audience will always be emotional, but there needs to be a limit. I can only request they take into consideration what the players might feel."

The triumphs of these women are not just victories for sports but for the spirit of Bangladesh itself. These trailblazers continue to inspire a nation, proving that with support and determination, the boundaries of achievement can be pushed further every day.

By Naziba Basher
Photo: Sheikh Mehedi Morshed/
Collected
In frame: Ritu Porna Chakma, Sabina Khatun, Jahanara Alam, Nahida Aktar



“I turned my critiques into my supporters”

-- NAHIDA AKTAR

Hailing from Kishoreganj, Nahida Aktar had her eye on sports from a young age.

“We used to live in Dhaka since I was a child because my father was a government job holder. We used to live in a colony where I was always playing something or the other with the neighbours. People would call those ‘boy’s’ sports,” she recalled.

Nahida Aktar, however, knew that just playing on the streets was not her goal. She wanted to make something of herself using her love for sports and her skills.

“I used to keep checking the newspaper to see when BKSP [Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protishthan] was admitting students. The moment I found a suitable time to be admitted, I took my chance and thankfully got in,” Aktar explained.

And added — “My schooling, training, everything happened in BKSP. After leaving home and my family, there was a stubbornness working in me. I kept thinking, ‘I came away from home to do this, and I must do something bigger than just joining BKSP. I need to prove myself.’ Even being admitted was a big opportunity for me. When I got the chance, my thought

process changed. I thought, ‘If I need to do something for myself, this is where I can do it from, there is no alternative.’”

At BKSP, coaches Mehedi Hasan and Dolly Rani Sarker took Nahida under their wings.

“I was always more into batting, but they kept insisting that I get into spin bowling. They saw something in me that I had not. They pushed me towards left-arm spinning. I would sometimes get annoyed, but now I realise that because they pushed me, I am where I am now as a bowler,” she shared.

After training in left-arm spin, Nahida played her first match against Abahani and got a five-wicket haul.

“I was just in class eight. That’s when my journey began at the national camp,” she recounted.

However, criticism was always there. “My family was hounded by neighbours for letting me play, but that just pushed me further to prove myself. I told myself, ‘I need to get out of here [the colony] to play and show them what I can do,’” Nahida said.

“When I left, I was away from all the criticisms. They did not see me, so they did



not speak. But once I established myself, their attitude changed towards me. They then began praising me and telling my family about how well I was doing. I was able to turn my critiques into my supporters through my performance,” she said, with a smile on her face.

Today, Nahida is not only the vice-captain of the national team but also the only Bangladesh woman to be named ICC Player of the Month (November 2023) and to be included in the ICC Team of the Year (January 2024).

“Any such achievement, especially on an international platform, is a huge deal. Without the support of my team, my captain [Nigar Sultana Jyoti], our manager, it would have been impossible. However, there’s always some pressure after international achievements – that of holding on to it. People’s expectations rise. While that feels good, it also gives some pressure,” Aktar added.

Nahida Aktar Age: 24
Debut: 2015

Bowling style: Slow left-arm orthodox
Best performance: 5-8 against Pakistan
in WT20I, Chattogram, 2023

Courtesy: TDS Sports Desk

“I always say, ‘Don’t tell them, show them’”

-- JAHANARA ALAM

Jahanara Alam was one of 11 players to debut together and form the first-ever Bangladesh women’s cricket team. Before that, she never imagined she would be representing the country to the world.

“I was an ordinary girl with no big aspirations. My mother used to dream that my sister and I would become news presenters so that she could see us on TV. But my sister became a sub-inspector and I, a cricketer,” Alam shared.

From the age of 10, Jahanara had a knack for sports.

“I was a student of Pioneer Girl’s High School in Khulna, which was popular for sporting activities across the district. When I saw some seniors playing volleyball one day, I asked if I could touch and receive the ball. Our Madam, who was watching from afar, called me to her and asked me if I wanted to play, and I immediately said yes,” Alam recounted.

“With my parents’ permission, I began to practice the very next day and within months, I was included in the main school team. I realised then that perhaps I had something in me,” she reflected.

In 2003, Jahanara came to Dhaka to represent the Khulna division’s handball team, and in 2004, she played the first domestic football match for women as part of the divisional team.

“I was only 11 then. A news channel had taken my interview, and I was so happy that my mother would get to see me in the news, perhaps not as a presenter but in the



news nonetheless!” she chuckled.

In December 2006, the Bangladesh Cricket Board took the initiative to form a women’s team, as per ICC directives.

“All the divisional coaches under BCB were then informed to recruit talented sportspersons. Our divisional coach was the late Sheikh Mohammad Salauddin sir, who was the spin bowling coach of the national men’s team back then. He used to live near my home, and he noticed that I had a ‘sporty’ personality,” Jahanara explained.

She added, “Khulna is a conservative place and there, I stood out. I would be walking about in T-shirts, trousers, and sneakers. He noticed that. One day, he approached me and asked if I would be willing to play cricket. I immediately said yes – it’s a sport, so I will play.”

Jahanara, however, had no idea about cricket when she readily agreed to play.

“Initially, I was not able to do anything – no bowling, no fielding, no batting. I was clueless. I didn’t even watch cricket before I started playing it,” Alam admitted.

“But what I had was fitness. Even before training time, I would show up on the field and do whatever I could to increase my stamina and endurance. I was first put in the ‘batting group.’ However, after a month of training, I found my strength in pace bowling,” she revealed.

With intense training, Jahanara achieved her highest speed of 120 kmph. “Once it dropped to 116 kmph, I trained harder to bring it back up. And Salauddin sir ensured that I was able to do so,”

Back in Khulna, Jahanara was a victim of rampant “eve-teasing.”

“There was a time I borrowed my aunt’s burka to commute to school. I didn’t share it with my family out of fear that they would stop me from taking part in sports. My parents too faced a lot of insults from society. During my adolescence, people would tell them, ‘Your daughter is of age, why are you letting her play? If she wears sports jerseys, no one will want to marry

her,” she recalled.

To them, her father replied, “My daughter is not doing anything wrong. She is doing a good thing. If she wants to play, I will let her play. My grandmother too was one of my biggest strengths. She has passed away, but I remember when I was younger, my father had a rule to return home before Maghrib. If I was ever late, my grandmother would wait outside and when I came, she would take my hand and walk inside the house, saying, ‘She was with me,’” Jahanara Alam shared, her voice brimming with love and respect.

After Jahanara made a name for herself, those who had pressured her parents changed their tune.

“They now say, ‘Jahanara is our pride.’ And that’s why I always say, ‘Don’t tell them, show them,’” she concluded.

After a year-long break, Jahanara is representing the country again as they face Ireland. This interview was taken just before the start of the series.

“I feel blessed to be able to represent Bangladesh again. I worked hard for it,” she smiled.

Jahanara Alam Age: 31
Debut: 2011

Bowling style: Right-arm medium
Best performance: 5-15 against
Ireland in WT20I, Dublin, 2018

Courtesy: TDS Sports Desk



#INTERVIEW

PAINTING THE WORLD IN PINK

Antora Mehrukh Azad's art in focus

Pink is an interesting shade and artist, Antora Mehrukh Azad has made it her signature – an unusual choice that boldly reflects the environmental themes her art explores. Azad's work, with its vivid neon pink hues, is a stark reminder of the rapid environmental changes transforming our world – a topic that resonates deeply with her own experiences of loss and displacement.

So, what prompted her to make this decision?

Azad says, "Neon pink symbolises artificiality. It's a colour that does not occur naturally in water or landscapes, yet it dominates our synthetic environments. It represents the tension between our organic ecosystems and the synthetic world we've built."

This deliberate use of colour challenges viewers to confront the reality of environmental changes. "I want people to feel the unnaturalness of the pink. It's beautiful, but it's also unsettling – just

like the changes we're seeing in the world," she says.

Antora Azad's journey into art began early. She credits her parents for nurturing this ambition. "My parents appreciated the arts and supported me however they could. My mother, in particular, was instrumental. She entered my work into competitions and art shows when I was too shy to do it myself."

Her commitment to craft is grounded in rigorous training. She holds both a BFA and MFA in Drawing and Painting from the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka. Her formal education helped her refine her technique, but her personal experiences and the world around her have always driven the stories she tells

through her art.

Art is deeply tied to the landscapes Azad grew up in. "I've witnessed firsthand how natural spaces have been replaced by urban sprawl. My family also lost our ancestral home to flood.

Growing up in Dhaka, one of the most climate-vulnerable megacities, I've seen the impact of climate change at both personal and community levels."

These experiences are central to her work. Her paintings explore themes of environmental degradation, displacement, and the collision between natural and artificial worlds. "It's

not just about what I've lost but about the larger picture of what we're collectively losing as a planet," she explains.

Azad hopes her work does more than just provoke thought; she wants

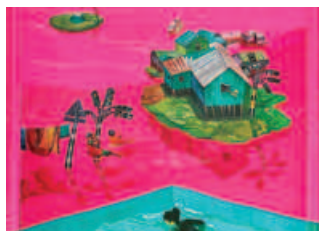
it to inspire action. "My paintings are fragments of a larger crisis. I want viewers to connect with them on a personal level and reflect on how their actions impact the environment."

Yet, she acknowledges a difficult truth. "I wonder sometimes – will my art drive change, or will it just be seen as decorative, something to hang on a wall? I hope it's the former, but that depends on how people engage with it."

In a world increasingly disconnected from nature, her paintings are vivid reminders of what's at stake. Whether displayed in a gallery or appreciated in a home, her work carries a clear message: the time to address environmental issues is now.

And like Azad, may we also learn to rethink how we live, build, and interact with our planet.

By Ayman Anika
Photos: Courtesy



Hitting all the right notes!

Wahida Hussain on jazz and fitness

A singer, fitness enthusiast, sports model, and teacher – Wahida Hussain has carved a unique niche for herself. As the vocalist of Blues Brothers & Soul Sister, she brings jazz to life alongside her band while captivating audiences with her covers of international classics.

Discovering her passion during the pandemic in 2020, Hussain continues to break barriers, especially in a country where jazz is still considered a niche genre.

In this interview with Star Lifestyle, she shares her love for music, the challenges she faces, and the passions driving her forward.

What inspired you to specialise in Jazz music?

I have always resonated deeply with blues and jazz, as these genres are timeless, soulful, and incredibly special to me. My band – Blues Brothers & Soul Sister – primarily focuses on blues, jazz, funk, rock n' roll, and classic tracks from the 1930s to the 1960s.

Jazz stands out because of its emotional depth and intricate melodies, which inspire me every time I perform. When I joined the band, I felt the need to stay true to these genres while encouraging us to experiment and mix things up. These styles might be a niche in Bangladesh, but they hold a unique charm that I wanted to preserve and share with audiences.

Personally, I felt inspired by artists like B B King, Stevie Ray Vaughan, and Ella Fitzgerald. Beyond my band, I also have an interest in other genres that capture my attention.

What challenges have you faced in gaining recognition?

One major hurdle we face, is tailoring our song selection to suit diverse audiences, as not everyone shares the same enthusiasm for blues and jazz.

Additionally, the local music industry often prioritises foreign artists over homegrown talent, making it harder for local musicians to receive the recognition and support they deserve. Despite these challenges, our niche audience deeply appreciates our music, and the demand for our performances has steadily grown.

To help jazz thrive, the industry should create a more supportive environment for local artists. We remain committed to our craft and hope to see greater acknowledgement for our contributions in the future.

How do you balance adding a personal touch to international song covers while staying true to the original?

When performing international song

covers, I go all-out to balance staying true to the essence of the original while incorporating my style and flair. Growing up, I was inspired by several women and musicians whose singing styles shaped my perspective, and I have developed a unique approach over time.

I ensure that my personal twist enhances the music without overshadowing its original charm. My band plays a key role in this process – we regularly hold practice sessions where they provide constructive feedback and helpful pointers.

How does your fitness routine complement your singing career?

I have always been very active. Back in school and university, I was an active member of the volleyball team. But after a while, I started feeling restless, and that's when I decided to join the gym. I joined the gym a little over five years ago, purely out of necessity.

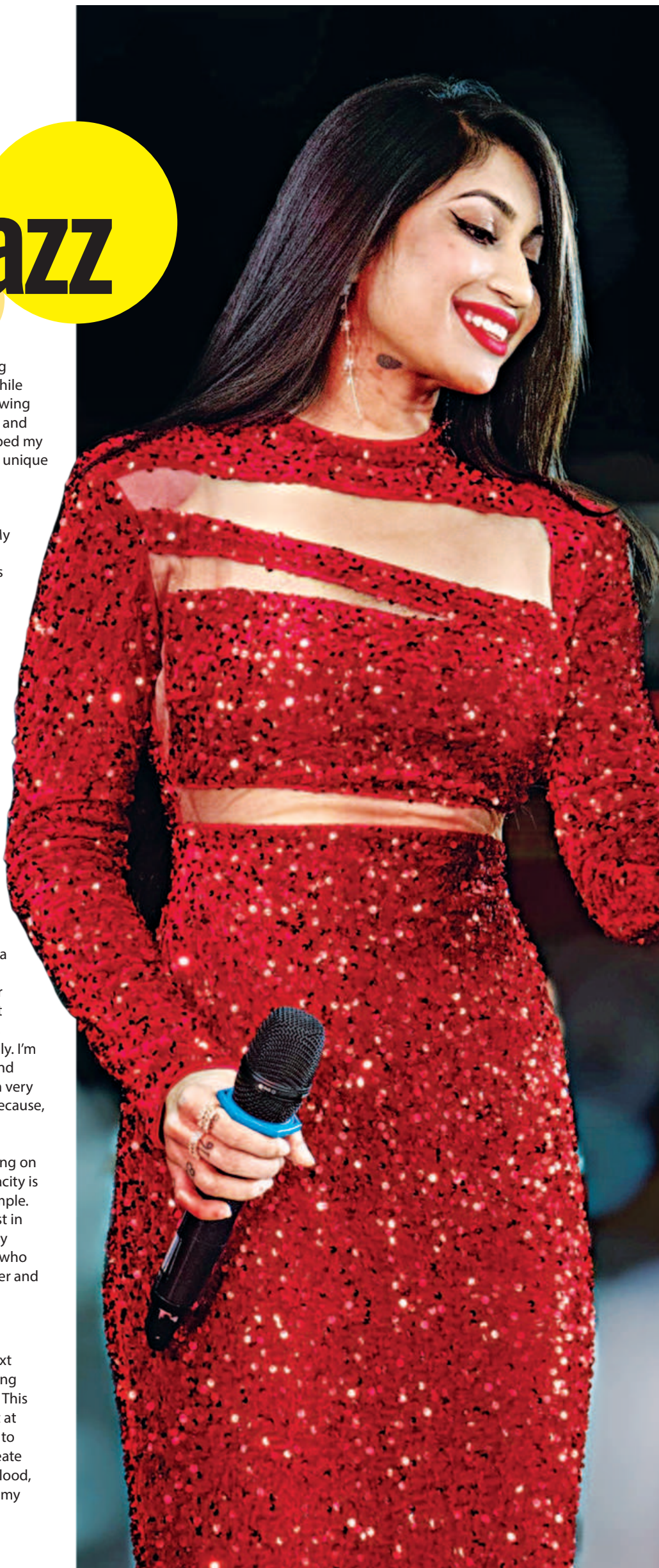
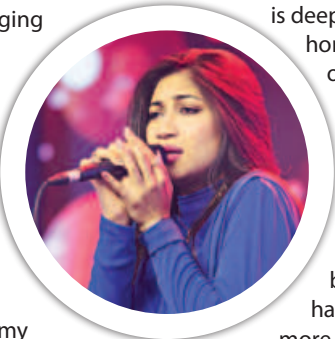
For me, working out intertwines physical and mental changes. How we think and feel is deeply connected to the hormones secreted by our bodies. Physical and mental health are inseparable, forming a holistic connection. I currently train for personal reasons, but as a by-product, it has benefited me immensely. I'm happier, more positive, and more confident on stage. I'm very particular about my appearance because, in my line of work, it matters.

Fitness also directly supports my singing, as healthy lungs are like being on a constant workout. Good lung capacity is vital for holding long notes, for example. Two people who inspire me the most in this journey — first and foremost, my father. And secondly, my boyfriend, who constantly inspires me to work harder and push my boundaries.

Do you plan to release original compositions?

I am incredibly excited about the next chapter of my life. I am currently doing cover music, and I absolutely love it. This is something I want to continue, but at the same time, I feel a responsibility to my family heritage and myself to create something original. Music is in my blood, and producing something uniquely my own feels like the next step.

By Ayman Anika
Photos: Courtesy



#REVIEW

Best tehari places in Dhaka this winter!

Tehari, like winter, has a way of making us pause. Whether at a street-side restaurant or a wedding feast, it unites people. As you navigate through the smoky afternoons and chilly evenings of this season, find time to indulge in the city's finest tehari spots. It is more complicated than just pointing to a location on a Google Map. Together, we will explore the city's best tehari places, one mouthwatering rice dish at a time.

Nanna Biryani: The legend

Starting at the heart of the old city, Nanna Biryani is practically an institution. Their tehari is less about fluff and more about flavour. Each plate is a masterclass in balance—beef so tender it might as well be poetry and rice soaked in just the right amount of oil and spices.

Bismillah Tehari House: Generous portions, rich flavours

In the bustling streets of Mirpur, Bismillah Tehari House has made a name for itself with its unapologetically rich flavours. If Nanna is tradition, Bismillah is indulgence. Their tehari does not just satisfy hunger—it makes you want to linger, savouring every bite.

Shad Tehari Ghar: Nostalgia served warm

Nestled in Lalmatia, Shad Tehari Ghar is like that childhood storybook you keep going back to. Operating since 1995, they have perfected the art of homely flavours. Their tehari does not shout—it whispers, with just enough spice to remind you that sometimes simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.

Maruf Biryani House: The green chilli charm

Over at Hazaribagh Bazar, Maruf Biryani House offers a spicier alternative, perfect for those who enjoy their tehari with a side of drama. The green chilli flavour cuts through the richness, creating a dish that's bold and unapologetic, much like the people who frequent it.

Allahr Daan Biryani House: Modesty in taste, richness in heart

Allahr Daan in Khilgaon does not believe in pretense. After a hard day, its tehari is simple yet flavourful, like a simple rickshaw journey to your destination. Each bite feels like a warm hug you did not realise you needed, making it the epitome of comfort food.

Hazir Biryani: Mustard oil magic

Hazir Biryani – a name that conjures up images of mustard oil-infused rice, succulent

beef, and a flavour profile so unique it could spark debates at your family winter gathering. This is the tehari for purists, for those who believe a plate of rice and meat can be as nuanced as classical Bangladeshi poetry.

Tehari Ghar: Tradition perfected

Tehari Ghar delivers food that feels like a warm embrace of tradition. Perfectly spiced, with tender beef, small marble potatoes and rice glistening in mustard oil, their plates are a consistent delight.

Whether you are at their Sobhanbagh branch or picking up from Uttara, Tehari Ghar captures the nostalgia of family feasts and the comfort of winter.

By K Tanzeel Zaman

Photo: Collected

HOROSCOPE



ARIES (MAR. 21-APR. 20)

Don't blow situations out of proportion. Do something constructive outside. Your ability to communicate with ease. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



TAURUS (APR. 21-MAY 21)

Emotional deception is evident. Confusion could result when communicating with others. The answers can only come from within. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



GEMINI (MAY 22-JUN. 21)

You can make personal changes. Monitor your budget carefully to avoid unnecessary stress. Things are looking up. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



CANCER (JUN. 22-JUL. 22)

Romance will unfold. Look into ways to better yourself. Difficulties with members of your family may result. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



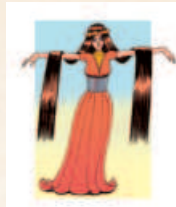
LEO (JUL. 23-AUG. 22)

Talk about emotional problems with your partner. You can solidify your relationship. Catch up on overdue paperwork. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



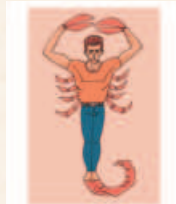
VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 23)

It's a great week for a family outing. Your spouse may be somewhat perturbed. Try to be patient and understanding. Your lucky day this week is Tuesday.



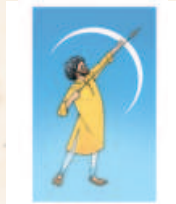
LIBRA (SEP. 24-OCT. 23)

Use your high energy to win favours. You can make moves, but they won't be settling. Have a heart-to-heart talk with a close friend. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



SCORPIO (OCT. 24-NOV. 21)

Listen to family members' problems. Friends may not understand your situation. Don't overindulge. Your lucky day this week is Friday.



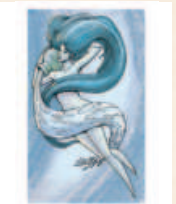
SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

Your unique approach to life will interest others. Try to schedule some time to spend with loved ones. Proceed with caution. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 20)

Help with your aspirations is likely. Look into alternatives that suit your needs. Don't let any small misunderstandings get in the way. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



AQUARIUS (JAN. 21-FEB. 19)

Take your time. Sign up for tours or courses that will enlighten you. You will be full of good ideas. You need to concentrate. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



PISCES (FEB. 20-MAR. 20)

Emotional disputes will only end in sorrow. Be precise in your communications. Activities will help bring you closer together. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

স্বর্ণের ছোয়ায়, তোমার উপমায়,
বদলে দিলে যে আমায়...

অ্যান্ডামিনা

সোপ

রূপচর্চায় আড়িজাত্য...

KOHINOOR CHEMICAL

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A TEA SOIREE: In celebration of the deshi cha

#EVENT

On the evening of Friday, 22 November, many people flocked to the rooftop of a building in the capital's Baridhara Diplomatic Zone. Chitchats, mingling, speeches, and laughter flowed, as a melodious flute provided the background score. In the centre of it all was tea!

"Cha er Adda" was a celebration of Bangladeshi tea -- an event organised by Durjoy Bangladesh Foundation, in collaboration with Halda Valley Tea Garden, and based on the ideation of lifestyle journalist, Raffat Binte Rashid.

The "centrepiece" of the rooftop was an elaborate tea stall, stylised as a *tong er dokan* -- with wooden benches, packets of chips and a bunch of bananas hanging over the counter, and many such elements creatively put together to bring out the typical roadside tea shop vibe.

So much so, there were wall posters



-- to exemplify, to-let adverts and the awkward but ever-so-common message of "*baki chahiya lojja diben na*" featured boldly, reinforcing the feel of *tong er dokan* and its surroundings! Meanwhile, hurricane lamps and a radio added to the mix gave a nostalgic twist to it all.

"Tea culture is something that is embedded in our everyday life. But somehow, it does not get that much highlighted," opined Durjoy Rahman, founder of Durjoy Bangladesh Foundation. "But we have to admit the impact tea has in our daily lives as well as in our economy. That's why we organised this event, to



celebrate the popularity and influence of tea in Bangladesh."

Guests sipped and tasted various kinds, served by Halda Valley -- *malai*, *masala*, *elachi*, green tea, and much more -- relishing in the charm and excellence of this popular beverage.

Of course, a cup of tea is more than just a drink. "For us, we need our tea at regular intervals," Raffat Binte Rashid said. "Our decibel amps up if we have a cup of tea in our hand and God forbid if politics is the topic of the conversation! Tea and politics are the right catalyst for that storm in a teacup here in Bangladesh."

Indeed, be it the hangouts with friends, those heated discussions on politics, or some alone time with a warm cup on a winter morning, the charm of tea is unparalleled!

The event also featured several guest speakers, such as Maisha Rahman, hailed as the country's first female tea auctioneer, who gave a talk on the trade.

Meanwhile, *cha* is usually incomplete without *taa* (snacks), as the adage goes. So, the rooftop fiesta offered a variety of it, from mouth-watering *jhalmuri*, *pithas*, *shingara*, and *samosa*.

Have we taken these *deshi* snacks and the accompanying drink for granted, often forgetting to appreciate the simple joys of life? That should not be the case, as they represent our culinary traditions and bind us together. With sips of different teas and delightful munchies, the soiree that was Cha er Adda has been a pleasant reminder of these simple joys of life!

By M H Haider
Photo: Abid Hasan Aomi