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E-mail: lifestyleds@yahoo.com
64-65 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-12

the Daily Star

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CUSTOMISED WINTER JACKETS

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LIMITING SCREENTIME

PHOTO: REMINISCENCE PHOTOGRAPHY
MODEL: SUNIDHI NAYEK, NEEL HURERJAHAN
STYLING: SAFIYA SATHI
WARDROBE: SAFIYA SATHI
JEWELLERY: 6 YARDS STORY
MAKEUP ARTIST: SALEHA SARWAR
LOCATION: SALEHA SARWAR STUDIO

#PERSPECTIVE

How winter is like your ex: A Dhaka memoir

Winter — it creeps in when you least expect it, with all the grace of an ex sliding back into your DMs. You have barely just settled into the rhythm of life, the heat simmering like unfinished grudges, when a sudden chill blows through the air, leaving you scrambling to dig out that one moth-eaten sweater. Sound familiar? Dhaka's winter knows how to leave an impression and much like an ex, it's inconsistent,

unpredictable, and makes you question every decision you have made in life.

At first, winter arrives like a pleasant surprise, a breath of fresh air in an otherwise suffocating routine. The cool breeze feels like the tender gestures your ex used to show, making you believe in change and possibilities.

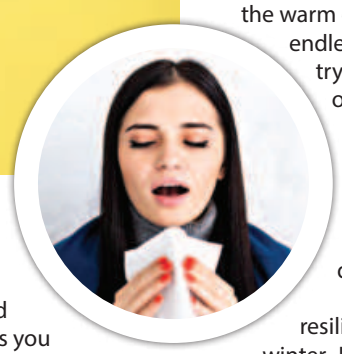
"It's different this time," you tell yourself as you layer up in a cardigan that smells like forgotten mothballs but just when you have settled into enjoying those crisp evenings and cups of steaming tea (because, let's be real, winter cha hits different), it starts ghosting you.

Temperatures rise inexplicably, and you are left sweating through your thermal innerwear, questioning every decision you have made. It's the classic hot-cold treatment, the same as those "we need to talk" text messages that end with "I just want to be friends."

In many ways, our winter is like that unreliable ex who promises stability but keeps sending mixed signals. One day, it gives you the chills that make you rummage for a second blanket; the next day it has you debating whether to pack it away altogether. You step out, confident in a smart jacket you dug out from the depths of your wardrobe, only to find it is back to its warm, unpredictable self. And you, the foolish optimist, are left standing in a sweat patch, feeling betrayed. Again!

Winter also loves a dramatic exit—just like the kind that leaves you standing in the rain, except here it's the dry, bone-chilling wind that makes you curse your fate. "It's leaving?" you ask. Of course, it is! But not before a sudden, merciless drop in temperature hits your bones like a cheap shot, making you run for shelter and question why you ever got involved.

When it leaves, it's abrupt—there's no lingering warmth, no sign of commitment. Just memories of huddling for warmth and counting down the days to its inevitable disappearance.



Just as your ex leaves you with lingering scars, winter does not spare your health either. It toys with your immune system, leaving you more vulnerable than a fresh heartbreak. The coughs, sniffles, and relentless cold-induced sneezing fits are not just inconveniences; they are reminders that it never truly had your back. You think it is cuddles and snuggles but the reality is sinus infections and herbal concoctions that taste worse than betrayal.

And let's not forget the accessories—the warm clothes, the blankets, the endless layering. All of this feels like trying too hard, doesn't it? Like overcompensating to make it work. Because deep down, you know winter will not stick around. It's a seasonal fling at best, and you will have to go back to sweating through your daily commute soon enough.

Still, in our Dhaka-style resilience, we romanticise the winter. Just like we reminisce about that toxic ex during moments of loneliness. We forget the constant hot-and-cold treatment and focus instead on the brief flashes of happiness—the warm cup of raw tea and bhapa pitha and the fashion statements that winter allows. In those fleeting moments, we convince ourselves it was worth it, even as we know it will disappear without a trace soon.

So, here's to you, unpredictable winter. You come and go as you please, leaving us flustered, confused, and a little bit wiser. Just do not blame us if we are a little hesitant to trust you next time. After all, we have been burned before.

By K Tanzeel Zaman
Photo: Collected

Winter Essentials by Aarong Earth: Your Natural Armour Against Dry Chill

Winter in Bangladesh is a season of contrasts. It's the time for weddings, chilly evening strolls with steaming cups of tea, and countless mornings draped in shawls. But for all its charm, the chill also brings some unwelcome guests—dry, flaky skin, dull, lifeless hair, and a general sense of tiredness from battling the season's harsh effects.

Enter Aarong Earth's Winter Essentials—a collection crafted not just to counter winter woes but to celebrate the season with self-care that's as natural as it is effective. Sourced from the finest ingredients, these products remind us that caring for ourselves does not need to be complicated.

If you have ever had your grandmother insist on a good home remedy, you already know the magic of natural oils. Aarong Earth's hair and body oils are your modern-day equivalents. Packed with rich hydration, they bring back moisture to skin that feels refreshing throughout the day. It's a remedy for the hair that leaves you feeling like you have just stepped out of a traditional winter morning oil massage session without the sticky hassle.

Think of Aarong Earth's scrubs as your winter version of the Eid cleaning spree but for your skin. Just as you would clear away months of dust from your shelves, these scrubs gently exfoliate to reveal the softness beneath. They are easy to use, simple, satisfying, and give you a glow you cannot ignore.

We all know the dreaded winter itch—when the dryness leaves your scalp feeling as rough as a patch of drought-ridden land. Aarong Earth's anti-dandruff packs tackle this head-on, cleansing your scalp while ensuring your hair looks healthy and full of life. And if you add Aarong's shampoo to your hair care routine, it's the kind of care that feels like wrapping yourself in a thick, cosy shawl—protective and comforting.

Bathing in winter is already a task—add harsh, drying soaps, and it becomes a nightmare. Aarong Earth's handmade bathing bars turn this daily routine into a small luxury. With natural scents and chemical-free goodness, these bars feel less like soap and more like a warm hug from someone you love, leaving your skin refreshed without the usual tightness.

Winter in cities like Dhaka, Sylhet, Chattogram, or anywhere else is hard enough without having to fight your skin and hair every morning. Aarong Earth's Winter Essentials make self-care feel less like a chore and more like an act of love. These are not just products—they are small reminders that in a season of weddings, deadlines, and life's never-ending to-do list, you deserve to slow down and take care of yourself.

Available now at Aarong outlets and online, Aarong Earth's Winter Essentials invite you to stay warm, nourished, and most importantly, true to yourself—naturally!

By K Tanzeel Zaman
Photo: Aarong Earth

#FASHION

WINTER'S BEST-KEPT SECRET

Jackets with a festive flair

"Short and sweet," is perhaps the only phrase appropriate in describing winter in Bangladesh. After months of constant heat and humidity winter brings a delicate balance of crisp air and soft sunlight, just cold enough to warrant layering. And layering, dear fashion lovers, is where the magic happens.

With winter festivities in full swing, is it time to rethink our wardrobe? What do we sacrifice this time: warmth or style? Well, with the right set of choices, would say, neither!

Winter weddings, for instance, are a spectacle of grandeur, complete with shimmering sarees, lehengas, and traditional panjabi sets. But amid the heavy silks and chiffons, there is a need for something fresh and functional that neither makes you look like a wrapped bundle nor leaves you to shiver in the cold.

That is why the fashion world is giving your casual jackets a cultural makeover. Gone are the days when bundling up for a winter wedding meant throwing on a mismatched shawl or a bulky sweater. After all, why brace for the cold when you can ace it in style?

The most recent buzz is the art of blending Western aesthetics with the rich heritage of Bangladeshi craftsmanship. Leather jackets adorned with patchwork of Jamdani weaves, Benarasi patterns, and intricate motifs add a pleasant burst of colours to match the festive feel of upcoming weddings, barbeque parties and of course, the New Year's.

Designer Azim Uddula shares fondly about his journey, "There's always a certain sense of love and freedom that comes from working with local patterns, but Western wear doesn't really allow that. For me, it took a good amount of struggle to put this concept into motion, but the results were equally rewarding."

No outfit alone can complete your look, so you must accessorise. When it comes to accessories, do not be afraid to play.

For a casual evening, chunky scarves in bold colours and textures can add a cosy yet polished finish to your look.

And let's not forget jewellery! Studs or short dangling earrings are all the craze in these days of minimal fashion. Bring out the layered necklaces that are usually too much to go with your summer outfits and pair them with your favourite overcoat or jacket.

Winter is not just about weddings, after all. For casual outings, oversized leather jackets with colourful patchwork are perfect for pairing with skinny jeans and combat boots. For a softer vibe, try a fitted jacket, layered over a short dress, and skinny jeans.

For men, winter is the best time to bring out the dapper look. You can experiment with bomber jackets featuring subtle accents and patterns. If you are ready to rock it with traditional wear, go for plain panjabis or kurtas and pair them with chinos and sneakers for a look that's effortlessly cool yet distinctly Bangladeshi.

And there you have it! The absolutely perfect winter is one that will let you enjoy the chill and the charm of winter effortlessly. With fashion brands redefining the jacket game, you no longer have to choose between staying warm and looking good.

So this season, don't settle for the ordinary. Step it up with jackets that fuse comfort, tradition and trend. After all, life is too short (just like our winters) to wear boring outfits.

By Nusrath Jahan
Photographer: Kaushik Iqbal
Models: Jessia Islam, MD Elias, Azraf, Progga Islam, Protity, and Joy
Designer: Azim Uddula
Wardrobe: AZ Clothing
Makeup and Hair: Sumon Rahat
Location: Chois Korean Restaurant and Café

An ode *to* BRIDAL SAREES

#FASHION

Dear brides of today, let us get to the million-dollar question, do you really need all that bling? Yes, it's your big day, the one that you have waited for, dreamed of, and hoped for your entire life! However, when you close your eyes and think of a bride you aspire to be whose image comes up first?

Chances are it's of your mother! Demure in her resplendent red katan, her forehead bedazzled with white and red kumkum dots, her lowered head covered with a sheer, red dupatta studded with golden stars reminiscent of the night sky — she embodied bridal beauty and grace for you since you were a little girl. Her delicate gold jewellery, fondly made by her parents for her wedding, are precious heirloom to be preserved for posterity.

When you were a toddler dolling you up in her bridal kataan, possibly her most treasured piece of clothing, she would imagine seeing you dressed as a bride, her eyes aglow with a million dreams and wishes for you!

Somewhere along the line, we missed a beat. So far removed from our own memories and culture we became entirely sidelined by a borrowed aesthetic that is not true to us anymore.

Heavily inspired by Bollywood, the Indian bridal style tends to be fashionable for many Bangladeshi brides. In a quest to find her bridal style, these brides end up blindly emulating actresses on screen.

What is most interesting is that these very actresses go for a very pared-down, traditional aesthetic for their own weddings! They shun sequined, mermaid lehengas, over-the-top makeup and bling they sport in the movies entirely, opting for a beautifully traditional saree or a simple lehenga in a muted shade, with just the right amount of jewellery with simple hair and makeup. Letting their radiant beauty shine they are the epitome of grace in their simple but stunning bridal style.

What a privilege it is to be in one's skin, true to one's self on the most remarkable day of one's life! Our own heritage of handloom textiles is incredibly rich and beautiful and deserves to be upheld with dignity and pride. After all, what is more beautiful than a bride draped in a red jamdani, stunning and our very own?

While brides opting for a lehenga or a gown is perfectly understandable, a saree is timelessly chic. What's more, designers are coming up with innovative styles that are intricate and unique. White and red are classics but a bride is spoilt for choice in terms of colour. A deep teal jamdani with copper and gold thread is absolutely stunning for reception, or a mauve one too. The possibilities are endless really.

And the prodigal "biyer katan saree"! What could be more symbolic of Bangladeshi bridal style? Many brides nowadays are choosing to wear their mother's wedding saree, revived and reinvented by designers who are more than happy to repair and restyle a decade-old saree.

In honouring a traditional garment by preserving its beauty using age-old embroidery techniques as well as modern, designers are championing the cause of sustainability, draped with style and love.

If you are a lucky girl with your mother's wedding katan here is your golden opportunity to make your childhood bridal dreams come true!

Muslin, the fabric of choice for Bangladeshi royalty of yore continues to remain relevant today in the best possible way. Embroidered, printed or painted—this miracle of a medium is extraordinary in holding its own.

An embroidered muslin saree is perfect for brides looking for understated beauty. Posh boutiques boast a stunning range of muslin sarees ideal for holuds or receptions. The best aspect about Muslin is that it is entirely customisable. Most designers are happy to accommodate the bride's wishes and create a unique, customised piece complete with a matching dupatta.

So, be a bold bride and embrace your own Bangladeshi bridal style!

By Sabrina N Bhuiyan
Photo: Reminiscence Photography
Model: Sunidhi Nayek, Neel Hurerjahan
Styling: Safiya Sathi
Wardrobe: Safiya Sathi
Jewellery: 6 Yards Story
Makeup Artist: Saleha Sarwar
Location: Saleha Sarwar Studio

#TRADITIONS

SAREES THAT TELL STORIES
Benarasi and Muslin for festive celebrations

As wedding festivities fill the air, sarees become the quintessential choice for those seeking elegance and cultural pride. From the intricate zari work of Benarasi sarees to the ethereal charm of Muslins, these timeless pieces offer a perfect blend of artistry and authenticity for weddings and family gatherings. Yet, to truly appreciate the beauty of these sarees, one must understand the hearts and hands behind their creation.

A designer's perspective: Bringing heritage to the forefront

Safiya Sathi, a celebrated Bangladeshi designer working with Benarasi and Muslin sarees, shares her passion for these cultural treasures, "Benarasi and Muslin sarees have been part of our culture for a long time. Our weavers pour their souls into crafting these. So, why wouldn't we wear their work proudly?"

Known for their intricate zari work, luxurious silk, and regal patterns, these sarees are synonymous with elegance. They are not just a favourite among brides but also a go-to for anyone wanting to make a bold fashion statement at weddings.

However, one common misconception about Benarasi sarees is their weight. Sathi clarifies, "People think Benarasi sarees are very heavy but the thread we use is incredibly soft. The zari work, entirely done by hand, is durable and timeless."

The blend of comfort and elegance makes Benarasi sarees a versatile choice for all-day wedding celebrations. This wedding season, Safiya has introduced a collection that celebrates both tradition and modernity. Red remains a favourite for Bengali brides, but she also embraces experimentation.

"Red has always been at the heart of Bengali bridal fashion, but my clients are exploring new colours like mustard yellow," she shares.

The artisan's craft: A product of patience

While Sathi shares her design philosophy behind Benarasi and Muslin sarees, Md Sobuj — a skilled weaver based in Benaroshi Polli, Mirpur 10 — offers a glimpse into the painstaking process of creating these masterpieces.

"We source pure silk from Rajshahi and threads from abroad, but the saree itself is entirely our creation, hand-loomed with care and precision," he explains. It takes weeks to craft a single Benarasi or Muslin saree. Each piece reflects the artisan's dedication, yet the high cost often deters buyers," Sobuj says.

He adds, "The thread we use is very soft and sustainable but because we can only produce one or two sarees at a time, the cost is higher. Unfortunately, many people do not understand why these sarees are expensive and opt for cheaper, imported alternatives."

This preference for foreign sarees poses a significant challenge for local weavers. Sobuj laments, "People forget the effort and tradition behind our sarees. It's disheartening to see our heritage undervalued."

Why choose local this wedding season?

The wedding season is a time for celebration, but it's also an opportunity to make thoughtful choices that extend beyond fashion. Local sarees like Benarasi and Muslin are not merely garments—they are works of art created by skilled weavers who have inherited techniques passed down through generations.

"The way weavers craft the sarees are extraordinary. They craft unique designs, which are both exclusive and valuable," says Sathi, adding, "Presently, we focus too much on fast fashion and frequently value imported products over our local ones. If this continues, our weavers will lose interest and turn to other professions."

Therefore, every purchase of a Benarasi or Muslin saree is a vote of confidence in local craftsmanship. It helps sustain livelihoods and preserve cultural heritage.

Make a statement with heritage

Think of a wedding or festive gathering. Amidst the sea of synthetic, mass-produced outfits you are making a statement with a Benarasi saree with intricate zari work or a Muslin saree. How wonderful would that be! These sarees are not just clothing – they are heirlooms, laden with stories of generations of artisans.

In an era where global fashion often overshadows local traditions, wearing a saree handwoven in Bangladesh is a bold act of reclaiming identity. It's about saying, "This is who I am, and I am proud of it."

This act of heritage appreciation also counters the growing dominance of fast fashion, which often erases cultural uniqueness. By draping yourself in a Benarasi or Muslin saree, you make a statement that quality, craftsmanship, and cultural pride matter more than fleeting trends.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Reminiscence Photography
Model: Sunidhi Nayek, Neel Hurerjahan
Styling: Safiya Sathi
Wardrobe: Safiya Sathi
Jewellery: 6 Yards Story

Pristine beaches and emerald waters: Top 5 destinations for island hopping in Asia

Island hopping is one fun activity that includes everything we love as tourists: exploring beaches, cruising through waters, swimming in deep blue waters, or walking through a coral staircase. Although this means rushing from one island to another, it may also include going through the vibes and rhythms of establishments and the nightlife of these archipelagos and isles.

Here, you can find the best of Asia in terms of island hopping that you do not want to miss in your next tour.

Palawan, Philippines

If you have a knack for exploring uncharted territory, Palawan can aid your quest with barren beaches and backing opportunities. The island chain of Mimaropa in the Philippines is arguably one of the best destinations not only in Asia but in the world, with more than 7000 islands to explore.

Let it be Coron, El Nido, Linapacan, or Port Barcon, you can hop over these islands of vast natural beauties that offer picturesque coastline, seashore landscapes, pristine beaches, crystal clear water lakes, and a majestic view of distant islands emerging from the bottom of dark blue saltwater.

Phi Phi Islands, Thailand

Consisting of six islands in the southern region of the country, Phi Phi Island offers the chance to hop over the white lands spread out onto the Andaman Sea.

Koh Phi Phi Don of Phi Phi Islands is so small that you can go around in 45 minutes yet it will mesmerise you with its breath-taking coastal view upon the horizon. With limestone cliffs and a snow-white beach, Koh Phi Phi Ley, another island within Phi Phi Islands looks like a paradise hidden in Asia.

With Maya Bay, Pileh Cove and Viking Cave, Phi Phi will amaze you in a manner that you will never run out of awe.

Langkawi, Malaysia

Langkawi is truly a gem for any visitor for multitudes of things to explore. With 99 islands bound and glued together by the emerald water of the Andaman Sea, Langkawi is an emerging destination for island lovers all over the world.

The Island has so many things to experience that it may disrupt your plan in a positive way: it can offer the taste of both the aquatic universe and wilderness packed with this region. You can unhinge yourself in the seashores of blue-white dichotomy or you can enjoy a fancy ride on the freshwater lakes.

With many parks and built environments, you can visit Langkawi Sky Bridge, UNESCO Global Geopark, GuaCerita caves, PulauPayar Marine Park, Temurun Waterfalls and a lot of other things in between.

Con Dao Islands, Vietnam

During your next visit to Vietnam, make sure to include plans for Con Dao Islands as it will offer a unique experience with a monsoon climate and pristine beaches. With 16 islands, this destination is tranquil and adventurous with snorkelling, diving, and turtle-watching.

Con Son Island of this beautiful archipelago offers the chance to explore the golden sands and calm coast, hike, and enjoy the sunset at Cau Tau Port. You can also explore a nice prison museum as well.

Con Dao Islands also offers thrilling activities like snorkelling, swimming, fishing, and spotting sea eagles on Hon Cau Island, Hon Tre Lon Island, Hon Trung (Egg Island), or Hon Ba Island.

Besides, a boat trip to Canh Island will give you the chance to observe sea turtles and an excellent peak at the mangrove forest as well.

Bali, Indonesia

Bali is one beautiful island that is also a gateway to an experience of a lifetime with many small and medium islands adjacent to it. Apart from flora and fauna, waters and sands, excellent landscapes and equally vibrant nightlife, you can plan a thrilling excursion around this island.

With a visit to Nusa Islands (Nusa Penida, Nusa Lembongan and Nusa Ceningan), you can enjoy Kelingking Beach, Manta Bay, or Angel's Billabong on one sunny day to enjoy the seashore and mangrove wilderness in one go. Serene relaxation is the best thing a trip to this island can offer to a visitor.

Apart from that, Gili Island or Lombok, you have to decide which direction to take because Bali offers equally magnificent experiences in all directions.

By Istiaq Muhit
Photo: Collected

Off the beaten path: Hidden gems in Asia for your next adventure

There comes a time when the well-known holiday hotspots do not meet the standards and you are spent wishing for a fulfilling travel experience. To shake things up, add these off-the-beaten tourist destinations to your itinerary for a meaningful and adventure-packed getaway!

Koh Tao, Thailand

The island is best known for offering Southeast Asia's most affordable aquatic adventures—including snorkelling, kayaking, and scuba diving. Scenic views like Koh Nang Yuan and High Rock perch on lush green hills, accessible by motorbike hikes.

Set your sights on Koh Tao Island on your next Thailand trip to dive into the breath-taking underwater life. Reach this tropical paradise by taking a flight, bus, or train from Bangkok to Chumpon or Koh Samui, and then ride a ferry to Koh Tao.

Bandipur, Nepal

Bandipur, also known as the Eden above the clouds, is a lovely mountaintop town with a generous Himalayan view. The town is clean and the main bazaar is traffic-free. Outdoor

enthusiasts can hike to stunning locations such as Ramkot and explore Siddha Gufa, Nepal's largest cave.

The Newari architecture of this land features unspoiled homestays. Stone-made paths, houses adorned with hanging greens and colourful petals, and the local hosts presenting mouth-watering cuisines—will inevitably entice you to abandon city life and settle down at Bandipur.

This underrated gem is about 89 kilometres from Kathmandu and is located en route to Pokhara. You can smoothly ride a bus to reach Bandipur and relax in between other adventures.

MacRitchie Reservoir, Singapore

Nature enthusiasts who enjoy trekking through tranquil tree corridors and looking for a break from the urban spectacles of Singapore—tie your shoelaces for MacRitchie Reservoir!

Amidst the wispy leaves of tall trees, treetop walking is one of the most interesting activities, offering a bird's-eye perspective of the forest canopy from the suspension bridge.

Some of the most popular family activities include fishing, picnicking, and kayaking. Spot and photograph wildlife throughout the pathways, and do not miss the Jelutong observation deck for a stunning view.

Located about 23 kilometres away from Changi Airport, you can take the Metro Rail Transit (MRT) to reach the largest reservoir in Singapore.

Semporna, Sabah, Malaysia

Semporna—an exotic island tucked away at the southern coast of Sabah—features a plethora of diverse cultures. Miles away from Malaysia's cosmopolitan hustle—here, aquaphiles immerse themselves in world-class diving. The vivid coral reefs and marine life, including turtles, sharks, and colourful fish, make this spot a diver's dream come true.

To arrive at this island, take a flight to Tawua Airport from Kuala Lumpur. Upon your arrival at the airport, take a bus to reach Semporna.

You can also add other offbeat attractions of Sabah, like Kinabalu Park, Kinabatagan River, and Mari Cultural Village to your bucket list.

By Tasmiah Rahman
Photo: Collected

#FYI

Simple tricks to limit screen time

Got work or assignments to finish but you are tempted to scroll on your phone instead? In our fast-paced digital world, a screen has gone from once being a strange tool to now becoming a daily necessity. With devices becoming essential for school and work, it seems impossible to cut down on that nasty screen time.

With how addictive social media is, the thought of putting your device down seems like a nightmare. Why get any work done when you can scroll and watch eye-catching reels instead?

Excessive screen time has been linked to health problems, such as obesity and high blood pressure, and can also affect your mental well-being. But do not stress just yet! With these simple tips and tricks, you can cut down on your screen time and balance out your life perfectly.

Turn off your notifications

Although this may seem like a strange choice to make, especially if you need notifications for work purposes, this method is a great way to filter out those distracting texts and notifications from apps that are not a priority. Distracting notifications on your phone are designed to steal your attention in the quickest way possible.

By switching off notifications for social media apps, or leaving your phone on 'Do Not Disturb', you can carry on with your tasks without fighting the urge to scroll away on your phone for hours. You will be shocked to see how your screen time is reduced in half with something so simple.

For iOS users, the 'Focus' option is a great way to filter out certain notifications, either for work, personal time, etc. Android devices also have a focus option, allowing you to put a pause on distracting apps.

Set a limit

Another commonly used option to reduce screen time is to set a screen time limit. These can be done manually on your settings app on your device, or separately on many apps for which you want to cut down your usage.

Setting limits is a very effective way to spend less time on distracting apps and also gives you more time to spend on more productive activities.

Screen time limits are also a great way to get ready before bedtime. Having a set limit of time to spend on your device, makes it easier for you to set a routine as well as reduce your exposure to blue light, helping you fall asleep better.

Get a hobby!

Seriously, get a hobby. Sometimes, it is as simple as that! With all the options available, there is a hobby out there for you to pick up and fall in love with. Hobbies are a great way to not only cut down screen time but to also have fun and be productive.

Instead of watching someone paint a portrait on reels, why not try it out yourself? Or perhaps you can become a writer and put out your best poetry like those accounts you see popping up on Facebook.

You can even use your screen time to search and follow up on fun and interesting hobbies and connect with people. Once you get immersed in a leisurely pursuit, you will notice just how easy it is to get off your phone; that long screen time will be something of the past!

Delete social media

Unless social media is a necessary tool for work purposes, the most helpful option for reducing screen time is to delete social media apps. This drastic change can initially be overwhelming, but many people have reported that this decision led to a massive change in their routine positively, and of course, reduced their screen time drastically.

Social media is fun, but it can also be highly distracting and is one of the main culprits as to why our screen time is so long. Deleting apps like Instagram, TikTok, X, and Facebook can help you improve your focus, free up time, and improve your mental health immensely.

If deleting apps completely seems too daunting, you can set time limits on these apps or log out for some time and take a social media break. Disconnecting from the online world may seem scary, but you will notice the benefits immediately, with reduced anxiety instead of increased screen time.

Make your phone boring

Making your phone "boring" might sound ridiculous, given just how easily addictive they are, but there are ways to make your phone a total yawn.

A unique way to do this is to turn on the greyscale option on your phone. This will change the colours on your phone to black and white only, making your phone extremely dull-looking. This trains your brain to check your phone less, as the main way in which devices grab your attention is by the bright and vivid colours on the screen.

Another way to make your phone boring is to delete or avoid downloading "fun" apps. These can be games, or distracting apps that cause you to spend hours on your phone. Removing colourful widgets and switching your phone wallpaper to an unattractive one can also help in making your phone a bore.

By Adiba Islam
Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad Ibne Sayed

Brain rot: How to beat it!

What is brain rot? Signs that your brain is rotting How to avoid brain rot Reclaim your time Limit screen time Revisit simpler joys Create before you consume

If you have ever lost hours of your life scrolling through endless TikTok reels, debating the supremacy of kachchi biriyani over tehari on Facebook, or stalking your cousin's latest engagement photos for the 87th time, congratulations! You might already be familiar with brain rot. The term, crowned as Oxford's Word of the Year, is not just internet slang anymore; it's a diagnosis.

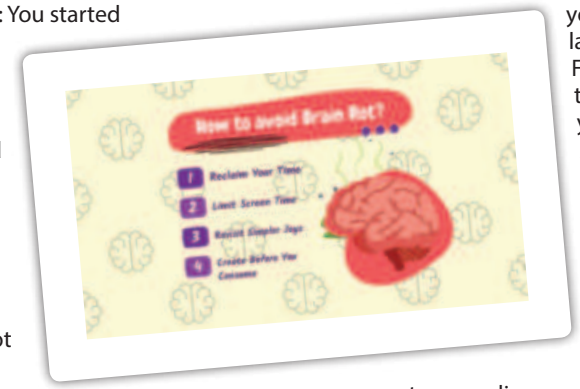
But what exactly is brain rot and why does it feel as if our collective heads are slowly turning into a mush of clickbait headlines and viral dance challenges?

Think of it as the intellectual equivalent of eating fuchka from a questionable vendor by the roadside. It's amazing when you put it in your mouth but months or years down the line of constantly having it, your inwards are ruined. To put it simply, brain rot is the slow deterioration of your attention span, critical thinking, and even meaningful conversational skills as a result of the ever-present flood of irrelevant information.

It's the reason you know every detail about a celebrity divorce but forgot your friend's birthday last week. It's why you can memorise a reel's sound in one go but struggle to remember the number of districts in Bangladesh.

This is not just an individual problem—it's a societal one. From university students losing themselves in meme pages during finals season to office workers sneaking in YouTube sessions during work hours, brain rot has quietly infiltrated every aspect of our lives.

Scroll regret: You started with a quick Facebook check and ended up watching a chicken-themed cooking hack at 2 AM. The chicken was not even cooked properly!



Attention span: You cannot get through a five-minute YouTube video without pausing to check WhatsApp, Instagram, and Foodpanda offers.

Mindless conversations: Your everyday chats revolve around what "someone" said on a random Facebook group, yet you cannot remember your last meaningful conversation with a real person.

Chasing trends: You have debated whether green jilapi was an abomination or a masterpiece more times than you have considered your own career goals.

If any of these sounds familiar, you are already in the danger zone.

Not everything on your timeline deserves attention. If it is not teaching you something valuable or making you genuinely laugh, skip it. Follow content that nourishes your brain, not stuff that makes you feel like an extra in a badly written Bangla drama.

Instead of spiralling into a three-hour meme binge, try spending some of that time reading an actual book or cooking that long-forgotten recipe your mum swears by. Small acts of mindfulness help reset your brain.

Use those built-in screen time apps to set daily limits. You do not need to know what someone's third cousin ate for breakfast or why some random influencer's workout video is going viral. Trust me, your sanity will thank you.

Remember when family evenings were about ludo or chatting over tea? Bring that back. A proper adda with friends or family will do more for your soul than a trending dance challenge ever could.

Instead of watching others' lives on a loop, start creating something of your own. It could be as simple as writing down your thoughts, sketching, or even making plans for that dream coffee shop you will one day open.

Brain rot is more than just an abstract idea; it's the actual effort to maintain mental acuity in a world that continuously draws you closer to unimportant things. It is the reason why, even when you have "done nothing" in theory, you feel exhausted at the end of the day.

But here's the thing—your brain is not beyond saving. With a little effort, you can pull it out of the endless scroll pits and bring it back to life. So, the next time you catch yourself deep in the void of content, pause, take a breath, and ask yourself, "Do I really need to know if someone's cat has more followers than me?"

Spoiler: You do not! And that, my friends, is how you beat the rot.

By K Tanzeel Zaman
Photo: Collected

#HEALTH

KNOW THE SIGNS

Early symptoms of a Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)

An infection anywhere in the urinary system — kidneys, ureters, bladder, or urethra can cause a urinary tract infection (UTI). These infections in the lower urinary system may be painful and uncomfortable. However, if a UTI progresses to the kidneys, it may lead to significant health complications.

So, here are some early warning symptoms that might help you get some relief.

A burning sensation during urination
Dysuria, which is pain or a burning sensation when you urinate, is a major UTI sign. The pain might happen either before or after you have to urinate. UTIs are the most common cause of painful urination, but issues with the bladder or prostate may cause painful episodes after you have urinated.

A small amount of urination
At times, you could have an intense desire to urinate. A few drops, however, are all you get. This can be an indication of a UTI and it occurs because an inflamed bladder, caused by bacteria, may lead to an overwhelming need to relieve yourself, even when there is not much urine in the bladder.

Lower back pain
One typical sign of a UTI is cramping pain. It might manifest as aches and discomfort in the lower back or pelvic region. What is the source of this pain? It is possible for the bacteria that cause UTIs to penetrate the urinary tract lining. Inflammation and irritation may result from this.

Frequent urination
On average, humans urinate seven to eight times a day. However, if you need to go to the toilet even more often than this, especially at night, you might have a UTI. You run the risk of it being detrimental to your bladder, as well as annoying and interfering with your everyday life.

Heavy odour from urine
A foul-smelling stream can be an indicator of a UTI. Germs might be circulating in your urinary system, namely in your kidneys, bladder, or urethra if you notice such an unpleasant scent.

By Samayla Mahjabin Koishy
Photo: Collected

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#DECOR

STUNNING BEDROOM FURNITURE SETS

A newlywed's guide to effortless elegance

Beyond the visual appeal, opting for a furniture set comes with practical benefits like saving time, trimming costs, and creating a unified space that feels like home—no mismatched or clashing vibes!

A seamless visual harmony Individual furniture can feel like a puzzle to complete, and mismatched furniture can sometimes result in visual chaos. Save yourself from the trouble by opting for a complete furniture set that sets the mood from "something is not quite right" to "home sweet home." Some sets are meant to dazzle with matching finishes, colours, and materials that create a seamless, polished look. Pick the right one according to the size, layout, and ambience of your home. The result? A living space that feels harmonious and inviting, as though it was pulled from the pages of a home décor magazine! It's a lifesaver for newlyweds—no endless debates over whether the bed clashes with the dresser or if that chair "doesn't quite fit" with the rest of the room.

A bedroom set for functional flair

A bedroom set is a one-stop solution to a stunning room while enhancing the flow of daily life with ease. Functional details shine through in the coordinated storage solutions—matching bedside tables with drawer space, a contemporary dresser that offers a home for your clothes, and often a bed with built-in storage to maximize efficiency.

A minimalistic divan with your bedroom set can save space while making cosy seating arrangements while being an intimate zone for quiet reflections. Methodically curated bedroom sets tick all the boxes of consistent finishes, colour matches, and materials.

Beyond practicality, a bedroom set also incorporates stylish details that elevate the mood of the space.

More style, less time

Whether you are furnishing your new home or moving in with family, decorating your bedroom from scratch can feel like running a marathon, especially for busy newlyweds juggling work and social events. Enter the bedroom set—the ultimate time-saver!

Instead of running from store to store pick a bedroom set that delivers a perfectly

organised package within a fraction of the time compared to picking individual pieces.

For couples starting their life together, this will allow you to plan on other fun things—like stocking up on cosy bedding, getting the plush carpet for the floor or getting your wedding photographs framed.

Meticulous design for quality and longevity

With everything made from the same suppliers—the maintenance becomes a breeze. With a quick wipe here and a little polish there—your bedroom set stays fresh with minimal effort.

When it comes to longevity, a carefully curated bedroom set is built with durability in mind, so you are not just investing in style but in quality that lasts. From sturdy frames to finishes that can withstand the occasional water spill, a good set promises to age gracefully.

Bedroom sets offer long-term and stress-free solutions for newlyweds. By investing in a well-made set from a reputable brand that offers EMI, (Equated Monthly Instalment) you can purchase quality products that save you from financial overload. After all, a bedroom set eventually becomes more than furniture; it represents the growth of your married life together!

By Tasmiah Rahman
Photo: Courtesy