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A Feast *for* THE NEW YEAR

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PHOTO: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL • LOCATION, FOOD, & STYLING: MERMAID BEACH RESORT

#LIFEHACKS

Mastering tasks: Jot it down, get it done

By writing down these simple things, you can achieve more than you ever would by simply keeping everything in your head.

To-do list

You can write down the tasks the night before you need to complete throughout the next 24 hours. A highly effective person would start their day with the end in mind. Likewise, you need to start the day with the clarity of what things are expected of you today.

Follow the 80/20 rule to determine the most important task and start that first thing in the morning. According to the 80/20 rule, let's say if you have ten tasks to finish the next day, only two of them are so important that they trump rest of the tasks, priority-wise.

If there is a particular routine task that you need to perform daily, consider creating a checklist outlining the steps of that sensitive task. For example, you have to go out every day. To avoid leaving important things behind, create a checklist for outings: your wallet, keys, ID, etc.

Doing so, you can ensure that your mind is not occupied memorising things that can be simply jotted down in a paper. Besides, this simple habit allows you to rather focus on more important things that may require your undivided attention.

Goals

Writing down your goal can be followed by a commitment toward achieving the goal that leads you to plan your next steps accordingly. This allows you to set SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound).

Research has shown that people who write down their career goals in a diary or notebook are more likely to achieve them. By setting your goals on a piece of paper, you get to evaluate the career options you have.

Also, you get to plan steps toward achieving each goal. A realistic goal with a deadline, backed up by a well-regimented plan, is bound to get you closer to your target.

This allows you to find flaws in your porous plan. This way, you can play the devil's advocate of your own plan.

Dilemma

Writing down the causes of your problem can have a significant effect in determining how you should tackle the problem you are facing. Start by writing down the causes of the problem. This allows you to get to the bottom of the problem. It is said that identifying a problem is a problem half-solved.

On the other hand, when you try to keep everything in your head, a phenomenon called "Cognitive Overload" kicks in, causing your brain to get so cluttered that it cannot think clearly. By taking a moment to write down the problem, you take a moment to step back and disassociate yourself from the feeling of urgency.

When you have to decide between two options and you are not sure which one is right for you, consider writing down the pros and cons of each option.

Besides, by writing down the causes of your worries and stress, your mind gets less cluttered. As a result, your mind gets clear and lucid enough to think clearly and strategically about how you can deal with the problem.

Gratitude

Start practicing gratitude in a piece of paper. Write in a diary the things you are grateful for. Research has shown that doing so can help ease a person's blood pressure. Additionally, this simple habit can make you more aware about the strengths you have at your disposal.

Every evening, write down one or two things that went well during the day. Whether it was a compliment you got, a small goal you reached, or even just a little something that you learned, write it down.

Hedonic adaptation, a term proven by a famous study on lottery winners, denotes that no matter how significant your achievement is, the initial feeling of excitement gradually fades away. That's why, if you don't know how to practice gratitude, it can lead to a discontented life.

Even the small, yet great things of your daily life — a healthy body, well-rounded meal, clean clothes, or even a shelter to sleep in, count it as a blessing and write it down. The purpose of writing these is to have better mindfulness.

By Minhazur Rahman Alvee
Photo: Collected

#FYI

Is it time to re-think New Year celebrations?

The year 2025 has finally arrived. As Dhakaites ushered in yet another year, there have been reports on social media about the hazards caused by rampant displays of fireworks and noise pollution resulting from fireworks. Although there have not been any reported cases of fatality this time, cases of burn injuries have been registered at hospitals; countless Facebook posts have also narrated the horrifying effect our "celebrations" have had on pet animals. Amidst the noise, children and the elderly also suffer endlessly.

This begs the question, is it time to re-think New Year celebrations?

"Two years ago, on New Year's Eve, a burning lantern had landed on the electric wires some 4-5 feet from my balcony. I sprayed water at the lantern from the bathroom window near it until the fire was doused out. If the wires had caught fire and had reached the transformer, it could have been catastrophic."

Come 31 December, law enforcement agencies are on high alert to avoid untoward incidences of public drunkenness, harassment, and molestation that made headline news in the past. It must be said that under the new directives, there has been some sanity in our observance of New Year's Eve. That, unfortunately, cannot be extended to the use of fireworks and firecrackers.

It is a global phenomenon that the coming of the New Year is celebrated

through elaborate firework displays. However, that "tradition" too is now being questioned. It is okay to celebrate, but at what cost?

"…Countries and cities are exploring alternative ways to celebrate New Year's Eve without fireworks, like light shows or drone displays. I wonder why we cannot do the same?"

Government directives released by the relevant ministry have urged people to refrain from using fireworks, firecrackers, and floating lanterns while observing New Year's Eve. All such unauthorised use is a violation of the law, and are punishable offence.

As per the law, violations of these rules may result in a penalty of up to one month of imprisonment or a fine of up to Tk 5000 or both for the first offence. For subsequent violations, penalties may increase to up to six months of imprisonment, or a fine of up to Tk 10, 000 or both. However, there has been a general disregard for this.

"We have faced such problems before and we successfully solved it. All we need to do is repeat what was done to bring about the social change"

Decades ago, sound and environmental pollution were major concerns during the observance of Laylatul Barat. Thanks to stringent measures in upholding the law and widespread social awareness measures, people can now observe Shab-e-barat with due religious and social fervour sans the crackers and the unnecessary fireworks.

Perhaps, there is a lesson to be learnt from this. Within a few days, the night sky of Old Dhaka will light up for the festival of Shakrain. While many will debate whether this was ever a Shakrain tradition, the fact remains that pollution levels will reach alarming levels on 14 January given the nature of our celebration.

So, what could be possible solutions to this widespread menace?

Firstly, the law should be strictly enforced. We have seen the success of such measures in the late 1980s and early 1990s when Shab-e-Barat fireworks had become a social problem.

Secondly, citizen forums in many parts of Dhaka now oversee the welfare of the neighbourhood. These organisations should run campaigns discouraging the use of fireworks/ firecrackers on days like 31 December and Shakrain. Flat Owner's Associations can also ban such activities within the apartment premises across the city.

Secondly, there should be widespread campaigns in schools and educational institutes on the damaging effects of our actions on animals, wildlife, and the environment. If we can instil values in children, they will not be interested in engaging in such harmful acts.

By Mannan Mashhur Zarif
Photo: Collected
***** Quotes have been taken from Social Media.**

#RELATIONSHIPS & FAMILY

Emotional cheating: What it is and how to spot it

Emotional infidelity, marked by deep connections outside a committed relationship, damages trust and emotional intimacy. Concealed interactions, growing emotional distance, and blurred boundaries highlight its impact. Open communication and therapy can help rebuild trust and repair relationships.

Often termed emotional infidelity, the phenomenon occurs when an individual who is already in a committed relationship forms a deep emotional bond with someone outside it. While not necessarily sexual in nature, emotional affairs can be quite damaging to existing relationships.

A healthy bond is not just about physical compatibility but also about strong emotional connection. This often involves sharing one's deepest thoughts, fears, and aspirations exclusively with their partners. However, emotional infidelity occurs when one partner begins to give the same level of importance to someone outside of the relationship, rivalling or even surpassing the emotional intimacy of the primary relationship.

What differentiates this sort of closeness from a strong platonic bond is the fact that there is usually some unexplored sexual tension between this new pair that has the potential to blow up fairly quickly.

Signs of an emotional affair

There are often some telltale signs of an emotional affair and it is best to recognise these so that one is careful not to cross the line and hurt their partner.

Concealing interactions, messages, or the extent of the relationship with the third party is often the first step of an emotional affair in the making. If you have come to a point where you must delete messages with a third person so your partner does not feel hurt or uncomfortable, you are probably already in the thick of it.

Increased comfort in these covert conversations can lead to emotional distance from the existing partner. It can leave them confused and lead to doubts, fights, and even psychological withdrawal.

Frequently thinking about or anticipating interactions with the other party can leave one disinterested and even bored in the primary relationship. Partners often engage in unnecessary comparisons between their partners and potential interests, often unfavourably so.

These relationships are often justified and rationalised by labelling them as "just friends", despite evident emotional closeness.

Impact on relationships

Emotional affairs can weaken trust and lead to considerable emotional distress for both partners. The one engaging in the affair may experience guilt, confusion, and a deepening attachment to the third party, while the other partner may feel betrayed, inadequate, and hurt. Over time, this dynamic can chip away at the foundation of the relationship, making reconciliation a challenge.

Navigating emotional boundaries

In today's digital age, the lines between platonic friendships and affairs can blur easily, especially considering how simple online communication has become. Every relationship is different and couples in committed relationships must establish and maintain clear boundaries regarding emotional intimacy with others. Open communication about what constitutes acceptable interactions outside the relationship can help prevent misunderstandings and potential emotional infidelity from the word go.

If an emotional affair is suspected or, worse, has already occurred, addressing it honestly is key. It is crucial to let your partner know about the nature of the outside relationship and the damage it has done to the primary partnership.

It is important to agree to work together to rebuild trust through transparency, consistent communication, and mutual support from then on. Couples therapy may be a prudent choice if one is to learn how to navigate the complexities of the relationship post-emotional infidelity and strengthen damaged bonds.

By Munira Fidai
Photo: Collected

#PERSPECTIVE

The awkward reality of lingerie shopping in Dhaka

As women, we have all been there — the ordeal that is lingerie shopping; wrapped in layers of discomfort, embarrassment, and sometimes downright frustration. While our city boasts an array of options from budget-friendly shops in the busy New Market area to high-end boutiques in posh malls, this particular aspect remains as awkward and uncomfortable as always.

For women, the act of buying a bra, a basic necessity for any female, comes with the unwelcome baggage of discussing their size and preferences with male salesmen.

What a paradox! While lingerie is marketed as the epitome of femininity, the majority of lingerie shops are staffed with men. And for those shops that employ women, the prices are often prohibitively high, alienating the average shopper before she even crosses the threshold.

The imbalance

Some things need to be cleared first. It is not the salesman's intention that feels off. No, these male assistants are almost always professional and respectful in doing their job. However, their help, no matter how well-intended, often feels intrusive.

"I avoid going to stores altogether unless it's absolutely necessary," shares Nafisa, a 26-year-old teacher. "It's so awkward to explain my preference, band size and cup size to a man who has no idea what it's like to wear a bra," she explains with a look of utter discomfort, "And it's not just about size; sometimes I want to discuss fabric, design, padded or non-padded, but I hold back because it's just too uncomfortable."

This sentiment resonates across all age groups and professions. For many women, the embarrassment stems not just from having to articulate something deeply personal but also sometimes from the casual dismissiveness of male salesmen.

"I needed a new sports bra and the male salesperson kept suggesting the wrong sizes. When I told him it would not fit me, he just replied, 'It will loosen.' How would he even know?" recounts Rima, a 33-year-old fitness instructor.

A price for privacy

The rare lingerie stores staffed by women are often synonymous with high-end shopping. Step into one of these shops, and you will likely find yourself surrounded by neatly arranged racks, soft lighting, and the presence of female sales assistants. But all that will come with a hefty price tag.

"I remember walking into a lingerie boutique once that had female staff. Surprise, surprise! However, my happiness of finding the 'dream shop' vanished when the price tags gave me a heart attack," says Tania, a university student. "Even the most basic bras were way beyond my budget and I never bothered to check out the sets."

That is not the end of the story. Even when you do find female staff ready to assist you, guess who is sitting at the counter to bill your purchase? That's right. The male in-charge.

It's worth a moment of silence, isn't it?

Breaking the Silence

What makes this issue particularly aggravating is how little it is discussed. Lingerie shopping is still shrouded in taboo, and women are often left to navigate these challenges alone.

"Whenever I bring this up with friends or family, the conversation quickly shifts," says Ayesha, a 34-year-old banker. "People either laugh it off or suggest online shopping as a solution. But online shopping isn't always practical. Sizes can be inconsistent, and returns are either a hassle or not an option at all."

The root of the problem lies in the lack of understanding within the lingerie retail market. While some strides have been made, such as the introduction of more sizes and online platforms, the in-store experience remains largely unchanged.

One possible solution is to encourage more stores to hire female sales staff, even in budget-friendly shops. Before you rush to say that girls don't want to work in these markets, think again. If a safe working environment is provided, girls will work. If girls are shopping, girls will sell.

"I'm not asking for luxury treatment," says Sumi, a 25-year-old graphic designer. "I just want to shop in peace without feeling like I need to justify my choices to someone who doesn't understand them. Is that too much to ask?"

At the end of the day, lingerie shopping should not be an embarrassment. It's time for businesses to recognise that comfort goes beyond the product itself; it's also largely about the environment in which it is sold.

Don't we always say that women deserve better? Why not give them that — better options, better service, and better prices? Until then, the struggle of lingerie shopping will remain a symbol of how even the most basic needs can become a challenge in a society that often overlooks women's needs.

By Nusrath Jahan
Photo: Collected

MIND THE GAP

NOSHIN NAWAL
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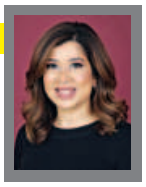


Backhanded Compliments: A South Asian Family Tradition

Every South Asian family has one. That omnipresent relative who buzzes around every family gathering like an over-caffeinated bee stings with their words, and then insisting they were "just joking."

Let's call her Sharmeen Fuppi. You might call her something else—Aunty, Mami, Chachi, Bhabi—but the essence remains the same. She's nosy, opinionated, and always the first to sniff out drama, usually while wearing a sequinned saree that could blind you in direct sunlight.

Sharmeen Fuppi doesn't just attend weddings, funerals, or baby showers. She infiltrates them. She's the self-appointed Chief Gossip Curator of the family, armed with more intel than the CIA and a knack for backhanded compliments that could rival Jane Austen's best lines.

She is the Sherlock Holmes of sniffing out secrets. She has a sixth sense for scandal and a PhD in turning molehills into mountains. At a recent wedding, she managed to deduce—based on nothing more than the groom's slightly wrinkled sherwani—that he must have fought with the bride. By dessert, her theory had evolved: the fight was about finances, his mother had interfered, and there was probably a prenup involved. None of this, of course, was remotely true. But why let the truth get in the way of a juicy story?

And don't even think about hiding from her. At any given gathering, she's stationed herself in the perfect spot—strategically near the food to intercept mid-bite with her rapid-fire interrogation.

"So, when are you getting married?"

"Why don't you have children yet? Is it a choice?"

"Oh, your child isn't in the top section… Don't worry, not everyone can be a genius like my Faria."

You can't win with her. If you're single, you're doomed to be reminded of it. If you're married, she's got a list of critiques about your wedding, your spouse, or—heaven forbid—the size of your waist. If you've dared to have children, she's ready to compare your parenting skills to hers (which, in her eyes, are flawless).

And let's not forget her espionage skills. Sharmeen Fuppi has an uncanny ability to overhear every hushed conversation, even in a room filled with a hundred people, a dhol, and a hyperactive DJ shouting, "Everybody says hooo!" Whisper about switching caterers at the next event? She knows. Quietly mention your cousin's mysterious new "friend"? By the time you've finished your biriyani, she's drafted a thesis on whether he's suitable for marriage.

Her talents are her ability to stir the pot and sit back with the serene satisfaction of a chef who's just perfected their signature dish. "I didn't say anything wrong," she'll protest innocently, after dropping a casual comment that turns the living room into a full-blown battleground. "I was just saying what everyone's already thinking!"

Of course, you can't not invite Sharmeen Fuppi to family events. She's family, after all, and in our culture, family comes before logic, personal space, and occasionally sanity. But deep down, you know the gathering would feel strangely incomplete without her. She's the chaotic spice in the otherwise bland dish of familial politeness. Without her, who would give you material for your group chats later?

So, the next time you spot your version of Sharmeen Fuppi at a gathering, take a deep breath. Smile through the backhanded compliments, laugh at her wild theories, and remind yourself that in the grand drama of South Asian family life, she's just playing her role. And who knows? Maybe one day, when she's not looking, you'll find the perfect opportunity to give her a taste of her own medicine.

By Noshin Nawal
Illustration: Noshin Nawal

#PERSPECTIVE

Fun, Fearless You!

Trashy shows on television are addictive, but rarely ever educational. At best, it makes one feel guilty for wasting time watching meaningless but entertaining content! One such show that has caused mass hysteria is Fabulous Lives Vs. Bollywood Wives — trash television extraordinaire — on Netflix. For the uninitiated, rich, bored, has-been wives of Bollywood unleash their worst possible traits by making snide remarks, mindless gossip, discuss apparent health benefits of Botox and other sundry injectables decked out in designer duds and dripping in diamonds! Hedonism has truly become second nature to humanity, and such shows only highlight it!

Interestingly enough, one of the leading ladies on this show, Shalini Passi, is a force to be reckoned with. Not just another bored billionaire's wife, Passi is an artist, patron of arts, philanthropist, writer and that's just a few of her many talents. She refuses to indulge in gossip like the others, doesn't let criticism get to her, focuses on self-growth, and does exactly as she please! Sounds fabulous, right?

A new year is on the horizon and we're here for it. From making exciting plans that will create memories for years to come to making countless resolutions, we are doing it all! One of the key elements on that list ought to be self-growth. Who doesn't love to sit with friends and gossip about celebrities or other people? While it may seem harmless, it's an unhealthy practice for sure. Ideas, inspirations and motivational matters are just a few topics to explore with friends. Once you avoid gossip, you'll be amazed how liberating it is!

Eat the right stuff. You are indeed what you eat and that double cheeseburger with fries and shake will make you feel exactly what it is — like junk! Reserve eating out for special occasions, even though we are constantly being bombarded with temptations. Food cooked at home is clean, fresh, and delicious, not to mention wallet-friendly too! Avoid caffeine-loading and say no to that bubble tea! Your body will thank you.

Nurture your hobbies. Put your phone down. Take up that book, sign up for guitar lessons, or learn salsa! Follow your heart and feed your soul by fuelling your passion, whatever that may be. Studies show that individuals with hobbies are much more likely to be happier and healthier than those who don't.

Perhaps the greatest resolution should be to focus on one's own self. Block out the noise, listen to your inner voice. Your own happiness should matter the most, not what others think of you. Wear that incredible outfit and let your unique style shine. Your greatest strength is your individuality, and nothing is more attractive than a person who is true to their own self. In this new year, be yourself and embrace the love that comes your way for that!

By Sabrina N Bhuiyan
LS Archive/ Adnan Rahman

#FOOD & RECIPES

A fresh, flavourful SEAFOOD medley

Indulge in the mouth-watering world of seafood with these tantalising BBQ and pasta recipes. Perfect for your next cookout or family gathering, these dishes showcase the rich flavours of fresh fish and assorted seafood. From smoky BBQ delights to creamy crab-infused scrambles and homemade pasta, these dishes are sure to satisfy your cravings and elevate your culinary experience. So, let's dive into these seafood masterpieces that will leave your taste buds begging for more.

Star LIFE Style

BBQ PROMFRET

Ingredients

300g pomfret (clean and put some deep slits on both sides)
1 tsp chilli powder
A pinch homemade dry herbs powder
½ tsp garlic paste
1 tsp ginger paste
½ tsp garam masala
¼ tsp coriander powder
¼ tsp cumin powder
5-6 curry leaves
2 tbsp lemon juice
Salt, to taste

Method

Mix spice powders, ginger-garlic paste, and salt. Add lemon juice to make a paste. Cut the curry leaves into two and add this to the paste (do not make a paste of curry leaves). Apply this to the fish. Keep aside for at least for 1 hour. Heat the charcoal and grill the fish until it is cooked.

BBQ RED SNAPPER

Ingredients

300g red snapper (clean and put some deep slits on both sides)
1 tsp black pepper
A pinch of homemade dry herbs powder
½ tsp garlic paste
1 tsp ginger paste
½ tsp garam masala
¼ tsp red paprika
¼ tsp cumin powder
Fresh Rosemary
Lemon juice (about 2 tbsp)
Salt, to taste

Method

Clean the red snapper thoroughly and make deep slits on both sides of the fish. In a bowl, combine the black pepper, homemade dry herbs powder, garlic paste, ginger paste, garam masala, red paprika, cumin powder, and salt. Add the lemon juice and mix everything together to form a smooth paste.

Rub the marinade generously onto the red snapper, making sure to coat both sides and into the slits. Let it marinate in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour.

Prepare the grill by heating it to medium-high heat. If using charcoal, ensure the coals are glowing.

Place the marinated red snapper on the grill and cook for about 4-5 minutes on each side, depending on the size of the fish. Once cooked, remove the fish from the grill and serve immediately. Garnish with additional fresh rosemary and lemon wedges on the side for an extra touch of flavour.

ASSORTED SEAFOOD PASTA

Ingredients

150g pasta
200g assorted seafood
100g tomato sauce
Salt and pepper, to taste
5 cloves of garlic, chopped
Olive oil

Method

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the 150g of pasta and cook (typically 8-12 minutes, depending on the shape of the pasta). Once cooked, drain the pasta, reserving a little bit of the pasta water to help adjust the sauce later. Set the pasta aside.

While the pasta is cooking, heat a little olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the 5 cloves of chopped garlic to the skillet and sauté for 1-2 minutes, or until fragrant.

Add the 200g of assorted seafood to the pan. Cook for about 3-5 minutes, until the seafood is cooked through and opaque. Be careful not to overcook it.

Add the 100g of tomato sauce to the pan with the seafood and garlic. Stir to combine and cook for another 2-3 minutes, letting the sauce warm up and thicken slightly. Season with salt and pepper to taste. If the sauce is too thick, you can add a little reserved pasta water to loosen it.

Add the cooked pasta directly into the skillet with the seafood and sauce. Toss everything together gently to coat the pasta evenly with the sauce and seafood.

Once the pasta and seafood are well-mixed, transfer to serving plates. Optionally, garnish with fresh herbs or a squeeze of lemon juice for added flavour.

CRAB SCRAMBLE

Ingredients

1 tbsp butter
1 shallot, thinly sliced
4 eggs
1/3 cup fresh cream
2/3 cup crab meat
2 cups fresh spinach
6 cherry tomatoes, quartered
2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives
¼ tsp salt
A pinch of black pepper

Method

Melt the butter in a medium size pan over medium low heat. Once butter is melted, add the shallot and sauté for 3-5 minutes, until shallots start to become fragrant. While shallots are sautéing, combine eggs, fresh cream and crab meat in a mixing bowl. Whisk to scramble the eggs and make the mixture come together.

Turn the heat up to medium high and add the spinach, stirring until slightly wilted. Next, add the egg mixture to the pan and stir gently. Add the tomatoes, chives, salt and pepper and continue to gently stir and break up the eggs, as you would any scrambled egg dish. Once eggs are no longer runny and cooked through, transfer to two plates.

Photo: Shahrear Kabir Heemel
Location, Food, & Styling: Mermaid Beach Resort

#FOOD & RECIPES

Refreshing mocktails to make at home

When it comes to staying hydrated and enjoying vibrant, flavourful drinks, there's nothing better than homemade mocktails made with fresh, natural ingredients. Whether you are craving something tangy, sweet, or packed with seasonal fruit goodness, these recipes are perfect for quenching your thirst.

FRESH GINGER LEMONADE
Ingredients
1 large piece of fresh ginger (about 3-4 inches)
4-5 lemons (freshly juiced)
2-3 tbsp honey or sweetener of choice (adjust to taste)
Ice cubes (optional)

Method
Peel the fresh ginger root and cut it into small pieces. Grate the ginger with a little bit of water to create a smooth paste. Place the grated ginger in a fine sieve or cheesecloth, and press or squeeze it to extract the juice. You should have around 2-3 tablespoons of fresh ginger juice. Squeeze the juice from the lemons and strain it to remove seeds or pulp.

In a large pitcher, combine the freshly squeezed lemon juice, ginger juice, and cold water. Stir well to mix. Add honey (or your preferred sweetener) to taste. Stir until it's dissolved completely. If you want a tangy flavour, feel free to adjust the amount of sweetener.

Pour the ginger lemonade into glasses filled with ice cubes (optional).

FRESH LIME POMEGRANATE JUICE
Ingredients
2 large limes (freshly juiced)
1–1½ cups of fresh pomegranate seeds
2-3 tablespoons of honey or sweetener of your choice Ice cubes

Method
Cut the pomegranate in half and gently tap the back with a wooden spoon to release the seeds. Once you have the seeds, whisk them in a blender for 15-20 seconds. Strain the juice through a fine sieve or cheesecloth into a bowl to remove the pulp. You should get about 1 to 1½ cups of fresh pomegranate juice.

Roll the limes on the counter to make juicing easier, then cut them in half and squeeze out the juice using a juicer or by hand.

In a large pitcher, combine the fresh pomegranate juice, lime juice, and cold water. Add 2-3 tablespoons of honey or your choice of sweetener and stir until it's fully dissolved. Adjust the sweetness to your preference.

SEASONAL FRUIT MOCKTAIL
Ingredients
½ cup of seasonal fruits (such as pomegranate, orange, pineapple, papaya, dragon fruit, watermelon etc.)
¼ cup fresh lime or lemon juice
A few fresh mint leaves
Ice cubes
Fruit slices or mint sprigs for garnish

Method
Place your seasonal fruits in a blender or food processor. Add the lime or lemon juice.

Blend until smooth. If the mixture is too thick, add a little water to reach your desired consistency. For a smoother mocktail, you can strain the blended mixture through a fine sieve or cheesecloth to remove any pulp or seeds.

In a large pitcher or glass, combine the strained fruit puree with cold water. Pour the seasonal fruit mixture into the glasses, filling them about three-quarters full. Garnish with extra fruit slices.

Photo: Shahrear Kabir Heemel
Location, Food, & Styling: Mermaid Beach Resort

#FOOD & RECIPES

Roshmalai Tea – Innovation or Insult?

Roshmalai tea, a fusion of creamy sweetness and traditional tea, divides opinions. Created by three friends at "Muhurto" in Mirpur 2, it attracts adventurous foodies but leaves tea purists sceptical.

In a world of pineapple pizza and spicy rosogolla, roshmalai tea was patiently waiting to be on the 'Food Crossovers Nobody Asked For' list. Thanks to the 'Three Musketeers' who made this happen — we now have the chance to put our opinions on the table.

So, the question now is; Is it a delightful experiment? Or is it a taste bud tragedy? Let's find out.

The tea arrives within minutes, and with the very first sip, you get really curious. You squint your eyes and attempt to make sense of what's going on. The creamy sweetness of roshmalai blends with the warm tea in a way that feels oddly comforting yet unfamiliar. Some might call it a dessert-like concoction, while others could debate it's a betrayal of traditional flavours.

For those with a sweet tooth, roshmalai tea might be a guilty pleasure, an item worth experiencing at least once. But for the real tea lovers, it could feel like a step extra — a clash of flavours that was never supposed to happen.

Roshmalai tea was an experimental fusion made by three friends, the fans of the iconic sweets from Neela Market, especially the roshmalai. As they were planning to start a tea stall together, they decided to put the item on the menu.

"It was an instant idea, and we decided to add that to the menu right away," shared Mahi, one of the co-owners.

The feedback has been mixed since the launch of their cart. "Our most popular item is still malai tea-burnt bread, but roshmalai tea has its group of fans. Some regular customers love it, while others, especially traditional tea lovers, think it's a bit too unusual," Mahi explained.

Despite mixed opinions, roshmalai tea catches people's attention. Its unique combination has made it a special item, bringing adventurous food lovers to the cart, while leaving traditional tea drinkers unsure.

"It's definitely a unique item, you know," shares Farhana, a student. "Food fusions are always exciting, but that doesn't mean they always turn out great. It's just okay — too sweet for my taste buds. I might give it a second chance, but that's going to be it."

When asked if she would recommend it, Farhana responded, "I might suggest it to my friends and family, just for the experience. But for anyone living far from Mirpur, I wouldn't say it's worth the hype."

At the end of the day, such food crossovers serve as a reminder that taste is always subjective. But food fusions like Roshmalai tea definitely leave a lasting impact, whether you like it, or not.

It's interesting to note that, one of the co-owners is from Cumilla, a place known for its famous roshmalai, which he sources for the tea.

Meanwhile, Mahi brought the idea of pairing it with burnt bread from his hometown, Kushtia. By combining local traditions with a creative touch, the team of three has poured their heart and soul into this unique item.

So here goes another question: Can roshmalai tea become the next big thing, or will it just be another short-lived trend?

Only time, and the tea enthusiasts can tell!

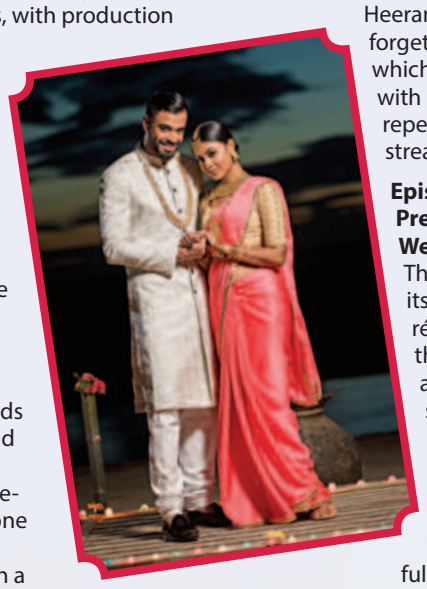
Located at Love Road, Mirpur 2, the name of the shop is 'Muhurto.' A cup of roshmalai tea costs just Tk 50, or Tk 80 when paired with burnt bread.

By Jawwad Sami Neogi
Photo: Jawwad Sami Neogi

#HUMOUR

Why Dhaka's weddings feel like NETFLIX SHOWS IN WINTER

For every '90s kids, the words wedding and winter are synonymous to them. There weren't any June matrimonies or extravagant destination weddings. There were only communal gatherings of relatives the bride and the groom barely knew. Fast forward three decades, weddings are now a season more dramatic than any Netflix series you've binged this year — wedding season. These aren't just weddings; they're multi-episode extravaganzas, with production values that could rival a big-budget streaming show. From elaborate sets to themed invitations and guest lists that resemble casting calls, Dhaka's winter weddings feel less like family events and more like award shows.



Episode 1: The Trailer (Aka The Invitation)

Every Netflix show needs a compelling trailer, and every Dhaka wedding begins with an over-the-top invitation. Long gone are the days of simple cards handed over with a heartfelt "Esho toh." Today, invitations arrive in boxes, often themed, and as intricate as the bride's jewellery.

From faux movie posters featuring the couple to QR codes linking you to the wedding's official Instagram page, these invites set the stage for what's to come. One wedding in Gulshan even delivered invites alongside a box of imported dates, as if whispering, "This is just the pilot episode, darling."

Episode 2: The Prequel (Holud Ceremony)

If there's one event that screams "Netflix prequel," it's the holud. Think of it as the origin story of the bride and groom's journey to marital bliss — or, at least, a journey to the nearest salon.

Every holud is a meticulously directed production, complete with dance performances choreographed by someone's overly enthusiastic cousin who dreams of being a celebrity stylist. Spoiler alert! Only one couple among the dancing crew was competent in dancing because they performed the same dance number at some other wedding. The decor often resembles a set from Heeramandi. And let's not forget the guest dress code, which might as well come with a caption: "No outfit repeats allowed — this is streaming in 4K."

Episode 3: The Grand Premiere (The Wedding)

The wedding day itself is the pièce de résistance, with sets that could make even a Bollywood director swoon. From floral arches reminiscent of Sylhet's tea gardens to stage designs that mimic Rajshahi's mango orchards in full bloom, no expense is spared.

Dhaka weddings also have every guest playing a starring role. The aunties wielding small talk like The Oscar's acceptance speeches, and the uncles lamenting about traffic (despite a no-traffic-jokes policy) are the unscripted comic relief and, last but not least, the individuals suffering from the "Wannabe Bride" syndrome. But the true stars of the show? The bride and groom, who arrive with the gravitas of royalty, complete with an entourage of photographers who ensure their every blink is Instagram-ready.

Episode 4: The Spin-Off (The Reception)

If the wedding is the main event, the reception is the spin-off series. It's bigger, bolder, and somehow, even more lavish. Here, themes range from "Winter Wonderland" to "Vintage Bengali Elegance," which, ironically, costs anything but vintage prices.

The food, however, is the real plot twist. Guests often find themselves in line for Kachchi, which tastes oddly similar to every other wedding biryani they've had that season. But it's the dessert corner, with items so exotic they come with a side of Google Translate, that truly steals the show.

Episode 5: The Behind-the-Scenes Drama

Like any good Netflix show, Dhaka weddings also have their fair share of behind-the-scenes drama.

The Budget Overrun Arc: The bride's family wanted a simple mehendi, but somehow, they're now financing a pyrotechnic display for the groom's entrance.

The Outfit Meltdown: A missing blouse or an ill-fitted panjabi can derail an otherwise seamless production, or ensue a pre-wedding fight between the soon-to-be-weds."

The Photographer Scandal: Somewhere, a photographer will demand an absurd amount of money for "candid" shots that look anything but candid.

The Streaming Success (Instagram and Beyond)

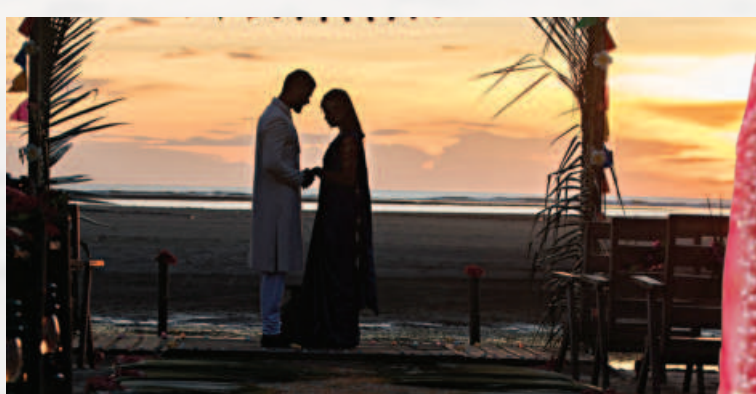
Once the season wraps up, the entire production is immortalised on social media. Photos are edited, hashtags are coined, and highlights are uploaded with captions like "#FinallyMarried #WinterDreams #BiyeGoals."

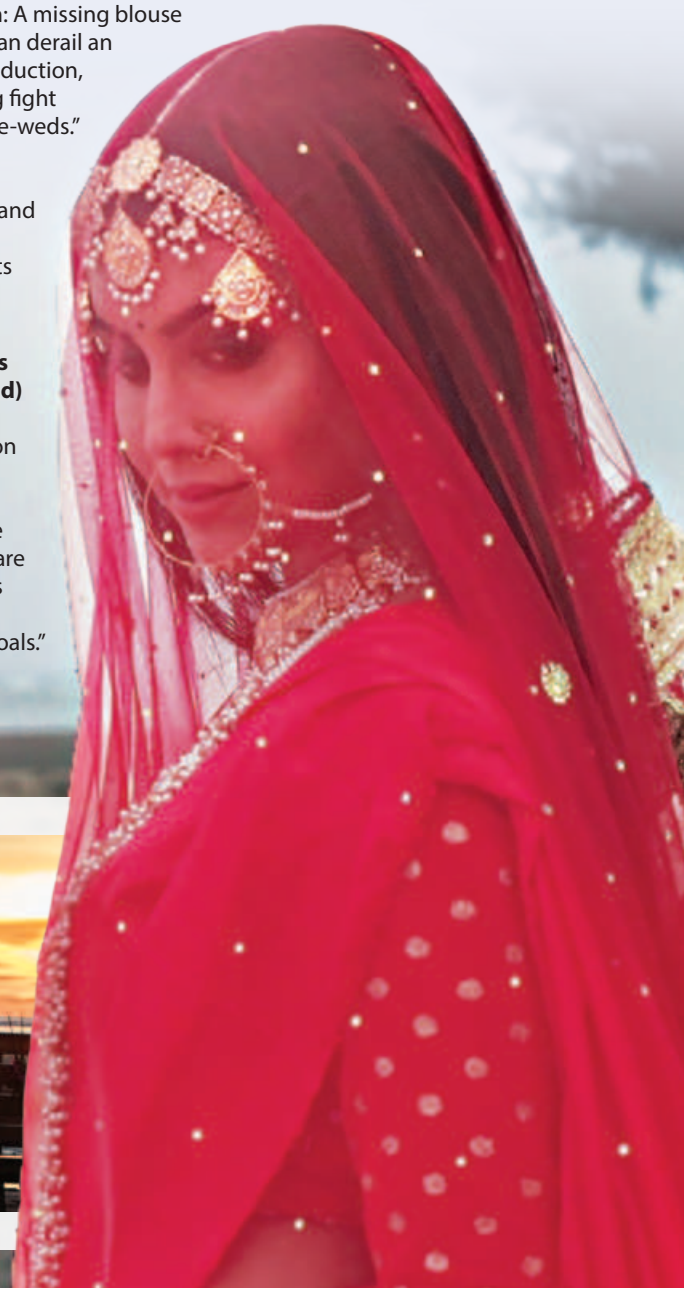
Behavioural psychologists suggest that this constant validation via likes and comments reinforces the desire to go even bigger with the next wedding. And so, the cycle continues, with each winter season raising the bar for over-the-top wedding productions.

Despite the excess, chaos and inevitable debt (financial or emotional), weddings have a certain allure. They are a celebration of our shared turmoil as a people, our culture, and our community. They keep us captivated, amused, and excitedly anticipating the next season, just like any other great Netflix series.

So, whether you're in Dhaka for a colleague's wedding, your cousin's in Chattogram, or a friend's in Barishal, relax, take in the spectacle, and never forget that every great performance requires a crowd.

By K Tanzeel Zaman
Photo: LS Archive/Sazzad Ibne Sayed





How to set a powerful sankalpa for the year

KUNDALINI RISING

SHAZIA OMAR

Writer, activist and yogini
www.shaziaomar.com

A sankalpa, often translated as "intention" or "resolve," is a heartfelt vow that aligns your inner purpose with your actions. Unlike traditional New Year's resolutions that focus on external achievements, a sankalpa emerges from your core desires and is rooted in a sense of self-awareness. Setting a powerful sankalpa for the year can guide you toward meaningful transformation and fulfilment. Here's how to do it:

Reflect on your inner longings
Start with introspection. Dedicate time to meditate, journal, or sit quietly to uncover your true desires. What do you long for in your heart? A sankalpa is not about fixing what's "wrong" but about affirming your highest self. Instead of saying, "I want to lose weight," focus on the feeling behind the goal, like "I honour my body as a temple of strength and vitality."

Make It Positive and Present Tense
A sankalpa should affirm what you want to embody, phrased as if it's already true. For example, "I am at peace with myself" or "I embody compassion and courage." This present-tense phrasing helps the mind integrate the intention as reality, fostering alignment with your subconscious.

Keep It Simple and Focused
Resist the urge to overcomplicate. A single, clear sankalpa creates greater focus and clarity. Complexity can dilute its power, so stick to one key intention that resonates deeply.

Revisit It Daily
A sankalpa isn't something you set once and forget. Repeat it daily during meditation, yoga practice, or quiet moments. Let it guide your choices and actions throughout the year.

By setting a sankalpa, you cultivate a mindset of purpose and authenticity, creating space for transformation from within. This practice reminds you that the seeds of your intentions shape the life you grow.

By Shazia Omar
Photo: LS Archive / Sazzad Ibne Sayed

HOROSCOPE

ARIES
(MAR. 21-APR. 20)

Don't blow situations out of proportion. Minor health problems will arise if you don't eat well. You might have an exciting encounter. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

TAURUS
(APR. 21-MAY 21)

You can change your living arrangements. Go out with friends. Your social activity should be conducive to finding love. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

GEMINI
(MAY 22-JUN. 21)

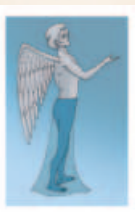
Short trips might let you encounter new partners. Utility problems may cause disruptions. Make personal changes that will enhance your reputation. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

CANCER
(JUN. 22-JUL. 22)

Be patient with children. Educational pursuits should help you develop your hobbies. Don't overextend yourself in the process. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

LEO
(JUL. 23-AUG. 22)

Find out what's expected and you'll surprise yourself. You need a job with more responsibility. Don't overspend to impress others. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



VIRGO
(AUG. 23-SEP. 23)

You could be erratic regarding personal relationships. Bring work home if it helps catch up. Minor health problems could result through exhaustion. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

LIBRA
(SEP. 24-OCT. 23)

Don't expect anything to avoid disappointment. Someone unexpected may not have your best interests at heart. Clear up chores left undone. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

SCORPIO
(OCT. 24-NOV. 21)

Your best results come through business trips. Romance may develop through social activities. Changes in your residence could be financially favourable. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

SAGITTARIUS
(NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

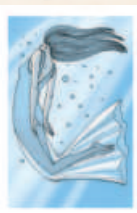
Social evenings will be successful. Channel your energy into passionate interludes with your partner. Your creative talent will be recognised. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

CAPRICORN
(DEC. 22-JAN. 20)

Unexpected changes in friendships could occur. Don't donate more than you can afford. Make sure everyone does their share. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

AQUARIUS
(JAN. 21-FEB. 19)

You could lose money if you are careless. Travel will stimulate your need for excitement. Interaction with colleagues may be upsetting. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



PISCES
(FEB. 20-MAR. 20)

Investments may not be lucrative. Uncertainty regarding your partner may emerge. You can have fun going out with friends. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

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EMPOWERING WOMEN'S ASPIRATIONS

Unlocking Opportunities with EBL Women's Loan

In today's world, women are taking on diverse roles balancing career and personal lives while contributing significantly to economic growth. However, when it comes to accessing consumer loans, many women in Bangladesh face unique challenges that hinder their financial independence and goals.

Current Scenario of Women and Consumer Loans

Limited Awareness of Loan Options: Many women, especially in rural or semi-urban areas, are unaware of the loan products available to them.

Income and Documentation Barriers: Women with non-traditional income sources or informal jobs often face difficulties meeting standard income and documentation requirements.

Gender Bias in Financial Services: Despite progress, cultural biases sometimes result in women being perceived as less creditworthy, limiting their access to financial products.

Reluctance to Borrow: Social stigma around women taking loans or handling finances independently is prevalent in certain segments of society, discouraging them from applying for credit.

The Need for Women-Centric Loan Solutions

To empower women and address these challenges, tailored financial products that cater to women's unique needs are critical. Accessible consumer loans allow women to pursue higher education or professional certifications, start or expand a small business, purchase essential household items or fund personal aspirations, build credit history and financial independence, etc.

How EBL Women's Loan Bridges the Gap

Eastern Bank PLC (EBL) has introduced the **EBL Women's Loan**, designed specifically to meet the financial needs of women. This loan empowers women by providing hassle-free, affordable credit for personal, professional, and family needs.

Here's how EBL Women's Loan makes a difference —

Attractive Loan Amounts: With financing of up to **Tk 20,00,000**, women can now dream big, whether it's higher education, travel, home improvement, or entrepreneurship.

No Collateral Required: The loan is collateral-free, ensuring women can access funds without the burden of providing security.

Affordable and Transparent Interest Rates: Competitive interest rates ensure affordability, making it easier for women to repay comfortably.

Flexible Tenure: Repayment terms up to **60 months** allow women to plan their finances effectively.

Simplified Process: With minimal documentation and a straightforward application process, the loan is tailored for ease and convenience.

Women-Centric Support: Dedicated relationship managers provide personalized guidance, ensuring a seamless experience from application to approval.

Why EBL Women's Loan is the Right Choice

The **EBL Women's Loan** is more than just a financial product — it is a tool for empowerment. Whether it's financing a dream project, supporting a family milestone, or achieving personal goals, this loan puts women in control of their finances.

Towards Financial Empowerment

By breaking down barriers to credit access, the EBL Women's Loan contributes to building a society where women can achieve their full potential without financial constraints. This is not just about meeting needs; it's about enabling aspirations and fostering independence.

With products like **EBL Women's Loan**, EBL is championing the cause of women's financial inclusion in Bangladesh.