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Dare to DAZZLE

HOW HORMONES RESHAPE YOUR BRAIN P3
THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF YOUR MENSTRUAL CYCLE
RISING COSTS AFFECT MENTAL HEALTH P5
MANAGING FINANCIAL ANXIETY EFFECTIVELY
INDULGENCE WORTH EVERY CHOLESTEROL RISK P9
WARM YOUR SOUL WITH NIHARI

PHOTO: ADNAN RAHMAN
MODEL: ARNIRA
STYLING: SONIA YEASMIN ISHA
JEWELRY: ZEVER BY AROHYE
MAKEUP: SUMON RAHAT & TEAM

#LIFEHACKS

How to keep white clothes pristine

It is common knowledge that white clothes are a staple in our closets. They are effortlessly chic but it's not so effortless to keep them sparkling when they keep attracting coffee spills, grass stains, and the inevitable yellow patches that come with time.

With a few clever strategies and sprinkles of know-how, you too can say goodbye to dingy whites from your wardrobe forever.

Treat stains ASAP

Don't be the lazy type when it comes to treating stains on white clothes! Removing them while it happens is a must if you want to keep them radiant.

Using a stain treatment and laundering it is the best way to go. If not available, dab or flush with cool water, stain pens, wipes, or even hand sanitiser because it has highly concentrated alcohol.

Collars, hems, and cuffs are usually overlooked when we are focusing on more obvious stains. Dirt, skin and sebum rubbing on white are adamant about sticking to places and it's important to shoo them before laundering the garment. Use an enzymatic stain remover to get the job done.

A lot of what we use in our everyday lives also transfers to white clothing. Deodorants, antiperspirants, makeup, lotion, sunscreen, hair products; you know, the important ones. Let them dry completely on your skin before you wear white.

Opt out of excess laundry products

Trust us when we tell you, less is more while using laundry on whites. Too much detergent, softener, whitener, or scent beads causes product build-up and white looks shabbier rather than whiter.

If you have been using traditional bleach made of chlorine, keep it very far from your white dresses. Chlorine bleaches deepen rather than wipe away the common stains from the body; sweat for instance, or sunscreen. It's brutal to textiles, so unless you are a devoted user, at least, skip it for white ones.

Frequently wash whites

Before fine dust and dirt settle on your favourite white hoodie or pair of jeans, wash them frequently. The coloured counterparts of the same items need fewer visits to the laundry, but whites even more.

The loose dyes from coloured garments are white clothes' worst enemy, other than personal care products. Wash white outfits separately, and try storing them on a dedicated shelf, with acid-free tissue papers between each material. In-wash dye catchers in washers also do the job.

Washing machine users — use the extra rinse cycle if the option is there. The persistent suds from detergents and products like softener or stain treatment will be gone in a current.

Store but not in plastic bags

Yellowing is a genuine concern and plastic bags aggravate the issue further. Moisture makes the clothes yellow, so resort to breathable materials like linen or cotton bags, to shield them from dust and light.

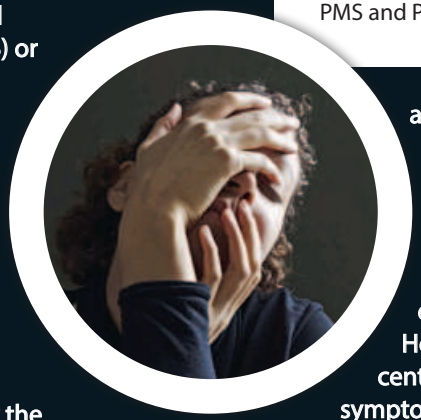
Sunshine is a natural (and harmless) "bleach" that brightens like no other. If you can dry the whites outdoors, take advantage of it!

By Tasneem Azim
Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad Ibne Sayed

#HEALTH & FITNESS

Understanding PMS and PMDD: The mental health impact of menstruation

The menstrual cycle is often regarded as a physiological process tied to reproduction. However, its influence on the brain goes much deeper. Research shows that hormonal fluctuations during the cycle reshape brain regions involved in emotions, memory, and behaviour. For many women, this can manifest in emotional and psychological challenges, particularly in the form of premenstrual Syndrome (PMS) or its more severe manifestation, premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD).



Hormonal rhythms

The menstrual cycle is orchestrated by the rise and fall of hormones, like oestrogen and progesterone. These not only affect the uterus, but also play an important role in brain function. Oestrogen, for example, has been shown to regulate the density of dendritic spines in nerve cells within the hippocampus, a region crucial for memory and learning.

A study conducted by neuroscientists, Elizabeth Rizor and Viktoriya Babenko, at the University of California, Santa Barbara, tracked 30 women throughout their menstrual cycles. Utilising advanced MRI techniques, the researchers observed that the brain's white matter microstructure and cortical thickness varied in tandem with hormonal changes.

These findings suggest that the menstrual cycle induces brain-wide structural modifications — extending beyond regions traditionally associated with reproductive functions.

The emotional roller coaster

The brain's response to hormonal fluctuations is not purely physical — it comes with emotional and psychological challenges. Premenstrual symptoms (PMS), according to studies, affect up to 75 per cent of menstruating women and include symptoms like irritability, fatigue, and emotional sensitivity. However, for 3 to 8 per cent of women, these symptoms escalate into premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD).

Recognised in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) premenstrual dysphoric disorder includes both psychological symptoms (such as irritability and difficulty concentrating) and physical ones (like headaches and weight gain).

"PMDD is most certainly related to the body, and I would call it a psychiatric disorder because the symptoms are psychiatric," explains Professor Dr Anwara Syed Haq, a renowned psychiatrist. "We should never overlook PMDD as something trivial, and the patient should be given the treatment she needs."

Treatment of PMDD often involves a combination of approaches, including mood stabilisers, antidepressants, and psychological counselling. In some cases, lifestyle changes like stress management and regular exercise can help alleviate symptoms.

Women with irregular menstrual cycles are advised to consult a gynaecologist to rule out other underlying conditions. This multidisciplinary approach ensures that all potential factors are considered, providing a holistic treatment plan.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Collected

Hormonal health needs more focus

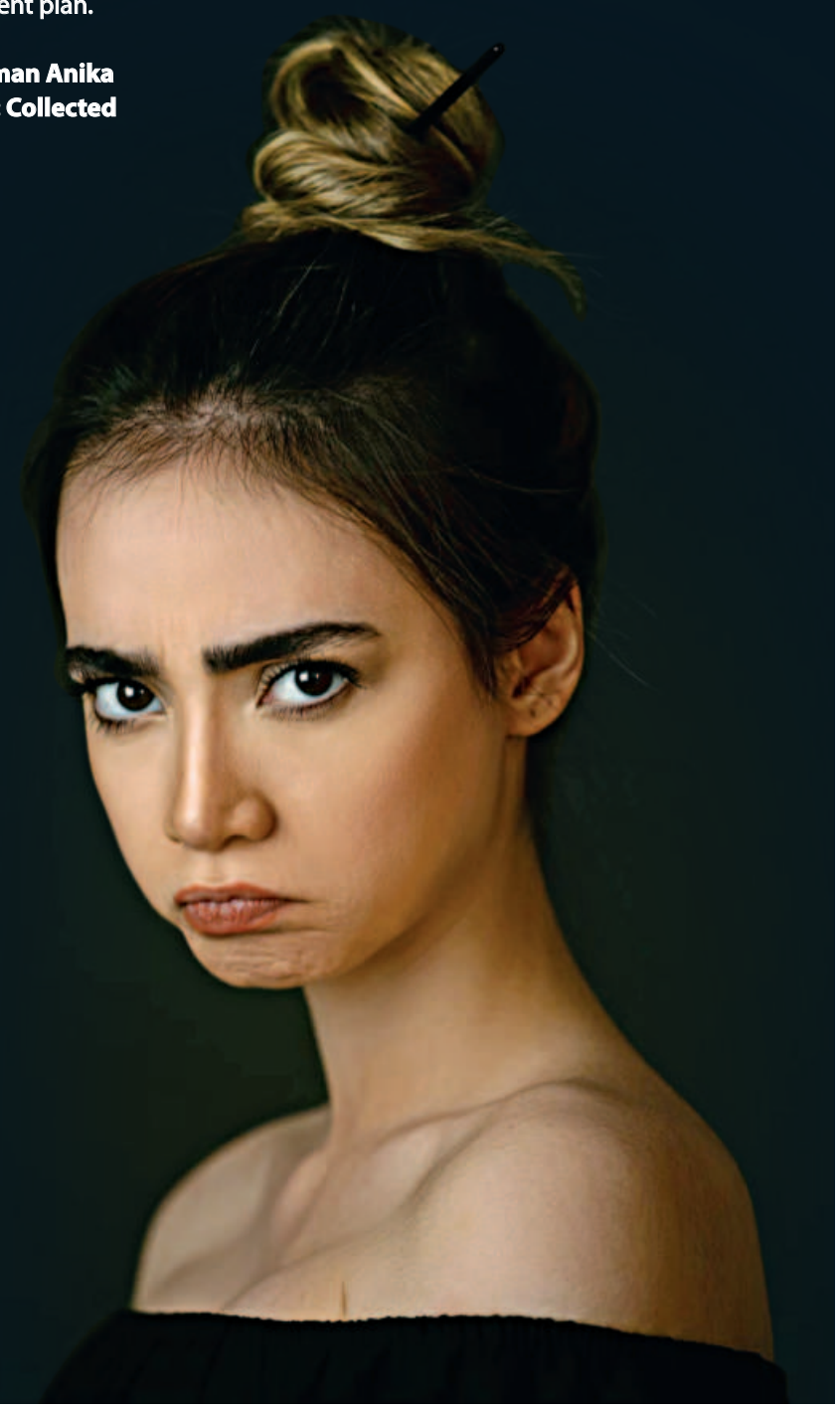
According to an article published in the leading multidisciplinary science journal, *Nature*, less than 0.5 per cent of brain imaging articles published over the last 25 years consider health factors specific to women.

This gap extends to drug development, where treatments are often tested on male subjects, leading to less effective solutions for women.

Understanding the neurological basis of conditions like PMS and PMDD is a vital step towards closing this gap.

Research into how hormonal fluctuations influence brain function could pave the way for targeted treatments that address women's unique needs.

With increased awareness, better representation in research, and access to effective treatments, women can better navigate the challenges of their menstrual cycles with dignity and support. We must acknowledge that menstrual health is not just a biological issue — it's a matter of mental well-being, societal equity, and compassion.



Building a secure future: A guide to savings schemes

Whether it's the reliable Fixed Deposits, the secure Sanchayapatras, or the flexible Deposit Pension Schemes (DPS) — savings schemes in Bangladesh provide opportunities for financial growth and stability. Here, we explore some of the most popular savings schemes, their unique benefits, and how they can help individuals achieve their financial goals.

FIXED DEPOSITS

Any commercial bank or NBFI in our country has a portfolio of Fixed Deposits. FDs remain a popular investment instrument for many people. At least 70 per cent of us invest in FDs. These range from 1 month up to 5 years at different interest rates. Needless to say, the longer the fund remains with the institution, the higher the interest rate will be, hence the return on investment will be higher too.

Banks or NBFIs cater to their needs depending on what the customer wants. Fixed deposits also come with a loan/overdraft facility against FDs. The tenure is usually time-bound and in case of premature closure, the customer could be liable to deduction of interest or imposition of applicable charges. Banks and NBFIs also deduct tax at source on the interest earned as it is a regulatory requirement.

SANCHAYAPATRAS

Sanchayapatras (SPs) are a safe avenue for investing funds**.** There are different kinds of SPs yielding different rates and returns — 5 years SP, 3 Years SP with interest withdrawal facility every 3 months, 5 years Pensioner SP, Post Office General, and Post Office 3 years SP.

Eligible customers can invest in US Dollars too. These investment instruments are Wage Earners Development Bonds, US Dollar Premium Bonds for up to 3 years, and US Dollar Investment Bonds for up to 3 years.

DEPOSIT PENSION SCHEMES (DPS)

A lot of Banks in Bangladesh open Monthly Deposit Schemes for their customers. Instalment size can be from Tk 500 to Tk 25,000 monthly. A DPS can be opened by anyone 18 years and above for a term of 3 years up to 15 years.

Various banks offer Deposit Pension Schemes (DPS) with several attractive features. These include competitive interest rates and complete transparency with no hidden charges.

Customers can also benefit from tax rebates as an investment incentive and access SOD loan facilities.

Monthly deposits can be made without any online transaction fees, and a dedicated charge-free Savings Account is provided exclusively for DPS purposes. Instalments are automatically deducted, ensuring convenience, and individuals can open multiple "Contributory Savings Schemes."

Additionally, customers can deposit their instalments at any branch across the country throughout the month. Senior citizens aged 60 and above enjoy preferential interest rates, adding to the scheme's appeal.

— **LS DESK**

Note: *Parts of this article were originally published in The Daily Star's Anniversary Supplement but have been revised and updated for this version.*

#FYI

Landing your dream job

Tips on how to get hired

When it comes to job-hunting, a lack of preparation often gets in the way of getting hired. People often underestimate the importance of planning, and that can leave them feeling unprepared and missing out on opportunities. That is why you need to be proactive and start early. By following the tips below, you can turn your dream of getting the desired position into a reality.

DO YOUR RESEARCH

The importance of doing your research cannot be stressed enough. This shows how reliable you will be at your job, once hired.

Firstly, try to gain sound knowledge about the industry and various related companies. Frequently browse company websites to do your preliminary study. Remember, not all details pertinent to your interview will be explicitly mentioned there. So, consider digging deeper into annual reports. Enhance your research skills over time by reading relevant sections of newspapers and magazines.

Armed with the knowledge of the industry and your desired company, now identify which skills are relevant and must-have. Try to gain experience related to your dream job.

There are several platforms like Coursera and Udemy where you can complete an online course, taught by experts. Besides, Harvard, Google and LinkedIn Learning also offer free courses online, which can help you gain foundational knowledge and a better understanding of the field.

TAILOR YOUR RESUME

It is important to set the narrative of your resume in a way that shows exactly what you bring to the table.

Nowadays, some of the leading companies in Bangladesh use the Applicant Tracking System (ATS) to sort through resumes when selecting from a large pool of candidates. This automated system looks for specific keywords from the job description in your resume.

You have to tailor keywords in your resume that align with the job description. The mistake most people make is sending a generalised resume to all companies.

It is always a good idea to have at least one reference in your resume. It could be your esteemed professor, a supervisor from your previous job or internship, or anyone who has known you professionally. Choose someone who can vouch for your integrity, earnestness, and diligence.

Also, always inform your references in advance so they are prepared to speak positively about your qualifications, if contacted.

NETWORK WITH SENIORS

Stay connected with seniors who already work at your desired institution. By doing so, you can gain first-hand insights into the company culture, industry, and problems they are facing.

The benefit of getting information from someone you know is that it will be tailored to your interests, unlike the generalised opinions found on the record.

Make the best use of LinkedIn, a social networking site for professionals, to see beforehand if there is a vacancy in your desired company. Companies usually post job openings on the "Careers" page of social media handles, job sites, or newspapers.

THE INTERVIEW!

According to Brian Tracy, a business coach, most hiring managers decide who they want to hire in just 30 seconds of first interaction. This way, your first impression can make or break your opportunity.

Try to think about the motivations of a self-respecting hiring manager — s/he wants to add a competent candidate to the team which makes them look good in the eyes of their superiors. So, think what you would do if you were in their place. This is called "design thinking." Use it to empathise with the other person, identify the problem, and eventually brainstorm ideas to solve it.

Lastly, practice common interview questions and prepare thoughtful answers that highlight your skills, experience, and how you can add value to the workplace.

By Minhazur Rahman Alvee
Photo: Collected

#HEALTH & FITNESS

INFLATION AND MENTAL HEALTH

How to cope during tough financial times

Bangladesh is currently grappling with high inflation; soaring prices of essentials placing immense pressure on households. This financial strain has taken a toll not just on people's wallets, but also on their mental health. The burden of unpaid loans, the fear of not being able to pay monthly bills, or the inability to provide for loved ones creates stress that often goes unnoticed, but can have serious consequences.

To understand the connection between financial challenges and mental well-being, Star Lifestyle spoke with Dr Abdul Hamid, a psychotherapist at the MONOBIKASH Foundation. Mental health, he notes, is not just about the absence of mental illness. It involves the ability to express one's potential, use it effectively, and maintain a balance between thinking, feeling, and doing. However, financial stress often disrupts this delicate balance.

"Financial stress can affect several areas of life," Dr Hamid further explains. "Our mental well-being depends on various domains such as physical fitness, mental and emotional health, finances, and relationships. If one of these areas does not function properly, our overall well-being gets disrupted."

Studies show that individuals experiencing financial hardship are more likely to report mental health struggles including feelings of hopelessness, irritability, and low self-esteem. The constant stress of financial instability activates the body's fight-or-flight response, leaving individuals in a perpetual state of heightened alertness. Over time, this chronic stress can lead to burnout, impaired cognitive function, and a weakened immune system.

BEHAVIOURAL AND PHYSICAL MANIFESTATIONS

The effects of financial stress often spill into behaviour and physical health.

"People may experience mood swings, lose patience easily, or struggle with concentration. It can disrupt sleep patterns, cause restlessness, reduce appetite, or lead to overeating," Dr Hamid clarifies.

He adds that in some cases, the stress manifests physically, causing unexplained pain or discomfort. "Although medical tests might not show any significant issues, the body reacts to the stress. This kind of stress can also severely damage intimate and personal relationships, creating a ripple effect in one's life."

Social factors compound these effects. Financial troubles can lead to strained relationships, social isolation, or even stigma, further intensifying feelings of inadequacy or shame. This vicious cycle can make it seem as though there's no way out but there are effective coping strategies that can help.

EFFECTIVE COPING STRATEGIES

Dr Hamid emphasises the importance of healthy coping mechanisms to counter the effects of financial stress. These include —

Prioritising physical health: Physical fitness plays a vital role. Regular exercise, proper nutrition, and adequate sleep are key to reducing stress and anxiety. Neglecting physical health often leads to unhealthy behaviours, making it harder to adapt and cope with crises.

Cultivating mental fitness: Financial crises are not just personal problems; they often reflect broader systemic issues, like global economic downturns or geopolitical conflicts. Recognising this shared reality can help us feel less isolated and more resilient.

Acknowledging the larger context can foster optimism and hope, which are essential for mental resilience.

Developing a clear financial plan: While emotional support is vital, addressing the root cause of stress – financial instability – is equally important. Create a detailed budget, prioritise expenses, and set achievable financial goals. These steps not only provide clarity but also restore a sense of control.

Creating support systems: Sharing concerns with trusted individuals or support groups provides emotional ventilation. When people with similar challenges come together, it helps in creating a sense of connection and reduces feelings of isolation.

Reframing negative thoughts: Approaching negative thoughts differently and adopting a growth mindset can make a noteworthy difference.

Going through a financial crisis may test your limits but it can also be an opportunity for growth. By prioritising physical and mental health and addressing the root causes of stress, individuals can emerge stronger and more resilient. Remember seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness. With determination and the right strategies, you can weather the storm and rebuild a brighter future.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Collected

Our TIMELESS OBSESSION *with* jewellery

Holly Golightly, a dazzling but destitute woman in New York, pining away at the jewels displayed in the window of Tiffany's — the fabled American jewellery house — is perhaps one of the most iconic moments in cinematic history! It is a fact universally acknowledged that we all love jewellery. We are magpies at heart; all things shiny and pretty tug at our heartstrings and pull us towards them.

To be honest ornaments of any sort are a good investment in that one can wear them time and again, year after year. Jewellery crafted from precious metals like gold retain its value much better than stocks and bonds, and women tend to favour it for obvious reasons.

They are not only objects of desire but also crucial in making or breaking a look. Any outfit is incomplete without the right kind of ornaments to complement it — a pair of pearl earrings or diamond solitaires bring the right amount of finishing touch to one's look, while a shimmering cascade of chandelier earrings give the much-needed dose of glamour to one's evening look.

For a wedding, a gold kundan choker will make you look like royalty while a string of pearls will elevate your appearance and give you a great boost of confidence at the board room! One would be hard-pressed to find a woman who can resist the temptation of diamonds. They are always a good investment and look fantastic too.

Diamond necklaces, earrings, and bangles with intricate designs are always in style and elevate any outfit instantly. While they are perfect for grand occasions such as weddings, everyday jewellery gets the most wear.

Tennis necklaces and bracelets are having a special moment now owing to their chic simplicity. Investing in a tennis necklace or bracelet will be a gift to yourself that will keep on giving, as they will never go out of style. Be sure to go to a reputed seller to get the best quality stones and value for money.

These days, precious stones that break the bank are not the only option. Cubic zirconia, moissanite and simulated diamonds are of good quality but at a much cheaper price point. They are set on sterling silver, gold and white gold so retain their value and will last you a lifetime. So, if you are looking for something beautiful at a reasonable price then look no further than these options.

While Holly Golightly from Breakfast at Tiffany's loved diamonds, she felt, "It was tacky to wear diamonds before forty!" Costume jewellery was her bauble of choice. And why not? They are fun, functional and fabulous.

A statement-making necklace, a pair of chandelier earrings, or a stunning brooch will bring the best kind of oomph to your look. For bold fashionistas, a tiara is also a great idea, given the right occasion to wear it arises.

By Sabrina N Bhuiyan
Photo: Adnan Rahman
Model: Arnira
Styling: Sonia Yeasmin Isha
Jewelry: ZEVER by Arohye
Makeup: Sumon Rahat & Team

ELEGANTLY INTELLIGENT

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DANGEROUS LIAISONS

Why bad boys are so attractive!

Maria — when I knew her in her early twenties — was a demure, people pleaser with a sunny disposition. As the eldest of two siblings, she was preternaturally nurturing and caring. Pleasant and friendly enough, but she was an introvert by nature. Hardly the kind to stand up for herself. A plain Jane if you will. One would imagine her falling for the cute boys with dreamy eyes and pastel polos. But no! Had a knack for the bad ones, she did.

Her first was the black sheep of the class, with his open defiance of rules and devil-may-care attitude that got him in trouble with university authorities every other day. He was rude and brusque; there was a rumour he had a history of substance abuse and did a stint at rehab. Always dressed in black, he was moody and brooding with a scowl on his face.

Maria was fatally attracted to this "hunk" (her words, not mine!) who never seemed quite taken with her. Anyway, soon they became an item, much to our chagrin. Theirs was a match made anywhere but in heaven; having grown up on a steady diet of Mills & Boon novels, she imagined him to be her knight on a white horse. In reality, he rode a Dark Horse motorcycle with a death wish!

Their torrid affair soon turned toxic thanks to the usual expectations in a relationship that nearly stifled this wild boar of a guy, and Maria was left heartbroken following her paramour's sudden expulsion from university on account of a serious misdemeanour and their subsequent breakup.

A series of affairs ensued with similar delinquents that ended badly, as it does. What happened to her later I know not, but her deluded aspirations of a fairy-tale happily ever after with these dark knights sure taught us all that love, in all fairness, should not be blind at all!

Taylor Swift famously crooned she knew that "he was trouble when he walked in." And yet, she fell hard and fast for him, only to have her heart broken. Such a shame, no?

Relationship experts argue that most women, on a subconscious level, are acutely aware that such men will not be emotionally available and yet, they cannot resist the charm, or lack thereof.

Evolutionary biologists claim men displaying macho, hypermasculinity have higher testosterone levels, which heightens women's attraction towards them. It is essentially evolutionary, as the female brain has been hardwired since cave days to be drawn towards macho men who are capable of keeping her and her family safe from all kinds of predators and possible threats.

So, although women today may not need such visceral physical prowess of their partners to protect them, the attraction remains. While they are aware that these men will probably never become good husbands, perhaps it's the thrill and excitement of living life on the dangerous side that gets them going!

There's more here to it. In our culture, girls are conditioned from birth to be polite, quiet, submissive, and compliant — I could go on and on! Women are generally expected to keep their heads down, respectfully so, and keep their wants and desires repressed. And lo and behold! Along comes the dark knight brandishing his sword of defiance, and sweeping these demure girls off of their chained feet and suddenly, the taste of freedom is impossible to resist!

She sees in him her way to independence, her open ticket to the skies she has always wanted to touch. His sense of adventure and courage to live life on his terms is like a drug to her and she cannot get enough of him! So, while she knows at the back of her mind that they may not say "I do," the momentary joys of freedom are worth the eventual heartache.

Word to the wise: look before you leap! In a quest for adventure and freedom, one must be mindful of the long-term emotional, mental, and physical impact of such tempestuous liaisons. At the risk of sounding like an intrusive fountain of unsolicited advice — enter these dark waters at your own risk.

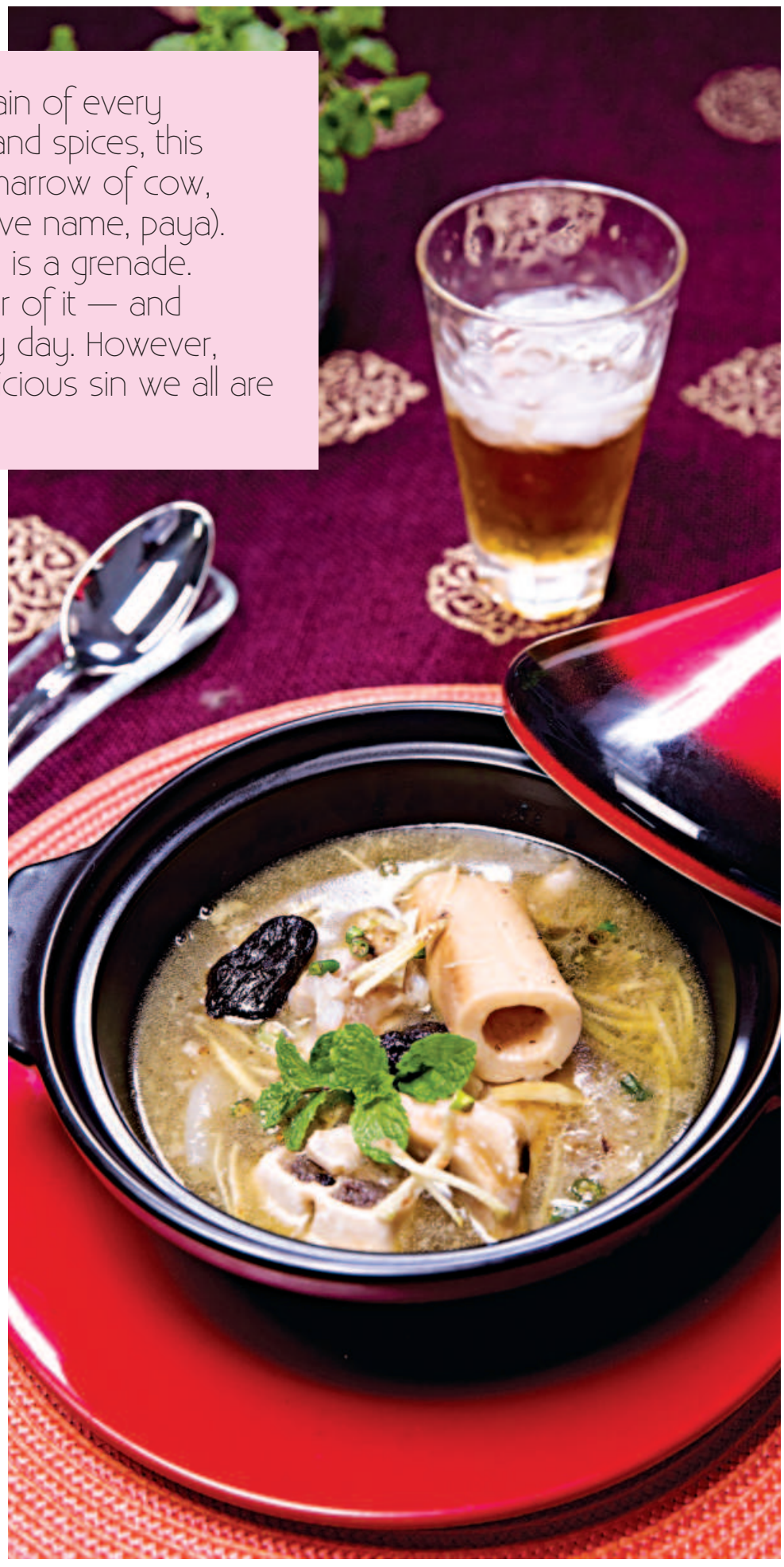
We are all for having fun and excitement in life, but weigh the pros and cons before deciding on such a volatile partner.
One may argue that people change but honestly, who are we kidding?

Views expressed in this article are the author's own.

#FOOD & RECIPES

NIHARI'S FINAL CALL:
Respond before winter waves goodbye!

Forgive me, readers, for luring you with the villain of every cholesterol chart — nihari! Drenched in ghee and spices, this popular dish is made with the feet and bone marrow of cow, goat, or sometimes lamb (hence their alternative name, paya). If beef is considered a cholesterol bomb, nihari is a grenade. There's a reason why some people steer clear of it — and honestly, their arteries might thank them every day. However, this slow-cooked meat stew is the kind of delicious sin we all are willing to commit, aren't we?



We are only human — flawed, hungry, and blissfully defiant. And let's face it, nihari is not just a dish, it's an emotion that warms the body and the soul. One spoonful bite or sip of this decadent dish is worth every raised eyebrow from the doctor (in my opinion, of course!). Besides, winter is the ultimate green light for guilt-free indulgence.

Now, as the season is packing its bags and waving its chilly goodbyes, it's practically begging you for one last delicious hurrah. Be it at Lalbagh's famous roadside eateries or Puran Dhaka's beloved Peshwarain — a bowl of nihari with naan or paratha is all you need on a foggy winter morning. Because really, if you are not diving into a bowl of nihari during winter, are you even doing winter justice?

We spoke to a few die-hard nihari enthusiasts from the city about their take on the dish as a winter delight, and their thoughts were as oily as nihari itself!

"Dhaka's winter barely lasts, but my love for nihari knows no season!" says Minhaz Ahmed, a middle-aged, corporate executive. "I grew up in Lalbagh. Having nihari in the early winter morning with chaler ruti (flat rice flour bread) is a ritual in my house. Just squeeze lemon juice in it and have it with flaky paratha or ruti. You, too, will forget to keep your cholesterol in check."

For many like Minhaz Ahmed, nihari is an essential winter ritual. For others, it is an essential year-round ritual.

Then, of course, there were those who saw it as an act of winter survival.

"When winter gives you chills, fight back with a bowl of nihari. It's self-defense!" declared Ismot Hasnain. Another fan, Rakibul Islam, joked about how this indulgence doubles as a workout: "Eating nihari in winter is my cardio — lifting the large bones counts, right?"

And the romanticised foodie, Jemim, said, "The first time I heard Brooklyn Nine-Nine's Charles Boyle ramble about the 12 components of food satisfaction, I thought, 'This guy's nuts.' But then I had nihari for breakfast and realised Boyle was onto something."

"Food isn't just about chewing and swallowing — it's a full-blown sensory symphony, and trust me, nihari hits every note! I never miss having it on a chilly morning."

Hamidur Rahman, a sixty-something retired college teacher, shares with a cheeky grin, "My doctor has strictly instructed me to keep my cholesterol in check, and I do my best. Every morning, I jog around Dhanmondi Lake to stay healthy. But when it's time for breakfast, I head straight to Star Kabab, where paratha and nihari are non-negotiable. It's a national breakfast."

Well, you have to admit, Rahman does deserve a little treat after all that jogging. For those who are unaware, it is assumed that nihari's story begins in the opulence of the Mughal kitchens, where it was prepared as a powerful breakfast for soldiers to ensure they had the energy they needed for the day.

So, honestly, can we really blame Rahman and the others? After all, what's life without a little indulgence on a chilly morning? Because let's face it — surviving in Dhaka is no less than fighting a war. And if Hamidur Rahman's weapon of choice is a plate of paratha and nihari, we'd say he's earned his victory breakfast, so should you all.

Any cardiologist reading this, please forgive us!

By Jannatul Bushra
LS Archive/ Sazzad Ibne Sayed

#TRAVEL

5 most beautiful temples of Bangladesh

Among the myriad of cultural gems scattered across Bangladesh, our temples stand out as the embodiment of artistic finesse and religious devotion. From the serene island on the Bay of Bengal to the bustling streets of Dhaka, each temple tells a unique tale, resonating with the echoes of bygone centuries, and their intricate designs bear witness to the incredible artistic skill of our ancestors.

So, join us as we explore the stories behind 5 of these beautiful structures, where devotion meets craftsmanship, and spirituality converges with stunning aesthetics, creating a tapestry of religious diversity and architectural splendour in the heart of our beloved multicultural nation.

The Kantaji Temple, Dinajpur

Including Kantaji Temple in any list of must-visit temples in Bangladesh is kind of inevitable, and there are some very good reasons for it. Renowned as perhaps the most exquisite terracotta temple in the country, this architectural gem was constructed in the late 18th century under the patronage of Maharaja Pran Nath of Dinajpur.

Dedicated to Lord Krishna and his consort Rukmini, the temple, following the Navaratna style, originally featured nine spires and stood proudly on a raised platform. Unfortunately, a devastating earthquake in 1897 claimed all its spires, yet the intricate terracotta embellishments, narrating tales and scenes from Hindu puranas, endured.

Despite the devastating earthquake, the temple's artistic beauty withstood the ravages of time, with the help of successful restoration efforts that safeguarded the better parts of its architectural grandeur.

Located just 12 kilometres outside Dinajpur town, local transportation to this temple is readily available for all visitors.

Puthia Temples, Rajshahi

Puthia, a small upazila in Rajshahi Division, features a captivating collection of beautiful and historically significant temples. Foremost among these hidden gems is the Govinda Temple, distinguished by its unique design and intricate ornate carvings.

Featuring 'charchala' towers, an architectural style originating in Bengal and later influencing the entire Indian subcontinent, the temple stands as a testament to the region's cultural influence and heritage.

A leisurely stroll from there will lead visitors to the Bhubaneshwar Shiva Temple, a monumental structure overlooking the picturesque Shiv Sagar Lake, demonstrating the grandeur of the 'Pancharatna' temple style. However, no exploration of Puthia's temples would be complete without a visit to the 'Dolmancha', a uniquely curved temple designed for the festivities of the traditional Bengali Rath Jatra festival.

Interested travellers can easily reach Puthia by local transportation and do not forget to include the Jagannath Temple and Chota Ahnik Temple to your visit list while you are at it!

Kodla Matha, Bagerhat

Situated in a secluded hamlet within the Bagerhat district, the Kodla Matha stands as an extraordinary yet relatively lesser-known temple. Despite its common association with the Shikhara architectural style, the reality is that Kodla Matha features a distinct design, unparalleled in the Indian subcontinent and essentially constitutes a genre of its own.

The mysterious origins of this exceptional temple add to its allure, with no definitive attribution to its builder. Fragmented inscriptions on the walls suggest a potential association with a Brahman, but no definite names could be ascertained.

Travellers seeking the Kodla Matha will find it nestled in Ayudha village, approximately 17 kilometres outside the Bagerhat district and local transportation is available from the city.

Adinath Temple, Cox's Bazar

Nestled atop Mainak Hill on the southern part of Maheshkhali Island in Cox's Bazar, the Adinath Temple stands as one of the finest temples dedicated to Lord Shiva. Offering a breath-taking panoramic view of the ocean from its hilltop location, this temple creates an unparalleled ambiance of serenity for the visitors.

The temple's architectural style reflects a harmonious fusion, drawing influences from the distinctive designs of the 'Natha' community. At the base of the temple hill, a vibrant festival unfolds every year during the Bengali month of Falgun, spanning 13 days and attracting thousands of pilgrims from across the country.

To embark on this spiritual and scenic journey, visitors can access Maheshkhali Island by boat from Cox's Bazar, and upon reaching the island, ascend the Mainak Hill to discover the allure of the Adinath Temple.

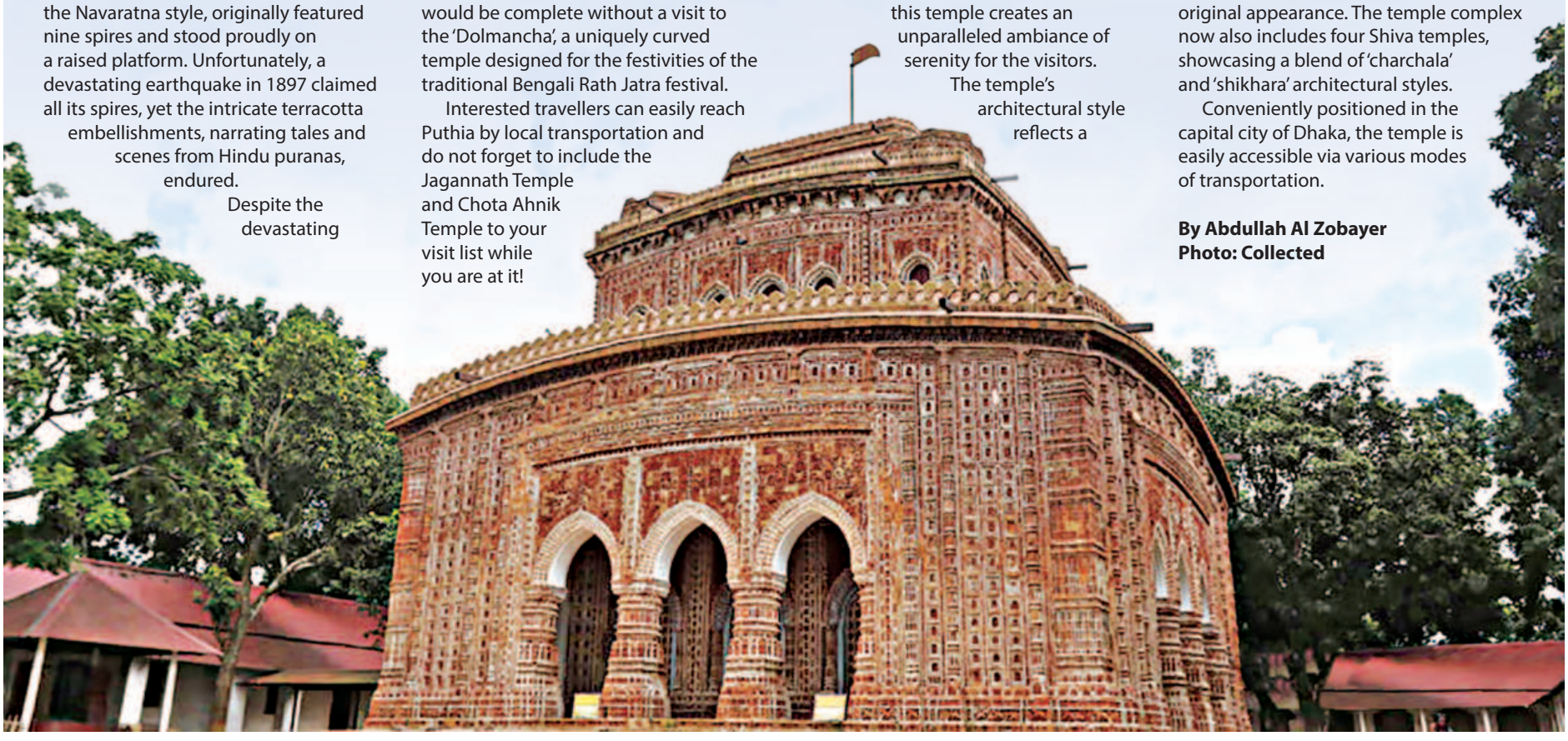
Dhakeshwari Temple, Dhaka

Located at the heart of Dhaka city, the Dhakeshwari Temple stands as one of the most famous Hindu temples in Bangladesh, bearing remarkable cultural and historical significance. With roots tracing back to the 12th century, it is deemed the oldest temple in the city.

Devoted to the Hindu goddess, Dhakeshwari, an incarnation of Goddess Durga revered as the guardian of Dhaka, the temple has served as a spiritual anchor for centuries. Initially constructed in the "Pancharatna" style by King Ballal Sen, the ancient temple underwent renovations in the 1960s, altering its original appearance. The temple complex now also includes four Shiva temples, showcasing a blend of 'charchala' and 'shikhara' architectural styles.

Conveniently positioned in the capital city of Dhaka, the temple is easily accessible via various modes of transportation.

By Abdullah Al Zobayer
Photo: Collected



KUNDALINI RISING

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How wellness retreats can boost mental health

Sometimes, the best way to recharge your mind is to step away from your everyday routine. As a yoga teacher of over 20 years, I have seen the transformative power of retreats first-hand. That's why I love taking people on wellness retreats with me. Having led over 30 retreats myself, I can say with conviction that retreats are more than just rest and relaxation; they are opportunities to reconnect with yourself in profound ways.

Wellness retreats blend the benefits of connection, meditation, and the healing power of nature. Removing yourself from familiar environments allows you to reset your mental and emotional state. Surrounded by nature and guided by certified wellness coaches, retreats create space for you to reflect, breathe deeply, and let go of daily stress.

Imagine meditating outdoors, with fresh mountain air filling your lungs, and sharing stories with like-minded people around a fire. These experiences foster a sense of belonging and clarity that's hard to find in the chaos of city life.

Wellness retreats will also include yoga sessions tailored to restore balance

and energy. Moving your body mindfully amidst nature enhances the release of endorphins and grounds you in the present moment. With the support of experienced instructors, you can learn tools to help you carry the inner peace you discover back home with you.

A retreat is not about escaping; it's about returning to your life with fresh eyes and a renewed spirit. If you have been feeling stuck, disconnected, or simply in need of a break, it's time to prioritise yourself. Bring a friend or be your own best friend and take yourself on a retreat. Nurture your mental health, your physical wellbeing, and create lasting memories of growth, joy, and serenity.

HOROSCOPE

ARIES
(MAR. 21-APR. 20)

Bold actions bring success. Seek balance in relationships and prioritise rest amidst bustling schedules. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

TAURUS
(APR. 21-MAY 21)

Focus on financial growth and stability. Trust intuition in decisions and nurture connections that feel genuine. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

GEMINI
(MAY 22-JUN. 21)

Communication shines, opening doors to new opportunities. Embrace curiosity but avoid spreading yourself too thin. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

CANCER
(JUN. 22-JUL. 22)

Prioritise emotional health. Home and family demand attention but self-care ensures balance. An unexpected gift brings joy midweek. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

LEO
(JUL. 23-AUG. 22)

Confidence leads the way. Take calculated risks in work. A surprise encounter sparks inspiration. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

VIRGO
(AUG. 23-SEP. 23)

Organisation brings clarity amidst chaos. Focus on health routines. A small achievement boosts confidence. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

LIBRA
(SEP. 24-OCT. 23)

Relationships flourish as harmony prevails. Collaborative efforts lead to success. Embrace creativity for fresh insights. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

SCORPIO
(OCT. 24-NOV. 21)

Introspection reveals hidden strengths. Career prospects improve through persistence. Trust instincts. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

SAGITTARIUS
(NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

Adventure calls! Travel or new learning excites you. Stay grounded and resolve lingering tasks for guilt-free exploration. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

CAPRICORN
(DEC. 22-JAN. 20)

Hard work pays off as goals materialise. Family and close friends seek your guidance. Practicality is key. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

AQUARIUS
(JAN. 21-FEB. 19)

Break free from routine. Networking opens doors to exciting opportunities. Trust your unique vision to navigate challenges. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

PISCES
(FEB. 20-MAR. 20)

Emotions run deep; channel them into creativity. A spiritual insight provides clarity. Nurture bonds that inspire. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

Star LIFE Style

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#DECOR

Radiant and romantic: Bedroom décor tips for the happy couple

No matter how much effort we put into decorating our living rooms or family gathering spaces, it is always the bedroom we end up unwinding in. For newlyweds who have just finished with their wedding formalities, a well-decorated bedroom is the go-to sanctuary for cherished memories and conversations. However, amidst the post-wedding chronicles — sorting out décor plans can feel like a drag. So, to set up your romantic retreat with more fun and less hassle, follow these easy tips!

Pick a romantic colour palette

Tired of the usual colour palette of grey and beige? Try mixing and matching with bright and rosy colour schemes like scarlet, teal, or burgundy for a cheerful vibe.

Go for ruby red, crimson, or earthy terracotta paired with soft cream, warm white or ash. If you want to be more subtle, opt for shades of pastel and use gold, olive green or royal blue as accents.

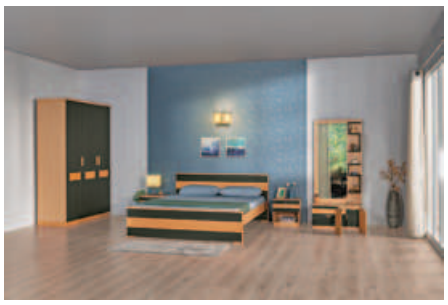
Be sure to make everything cohesive and calming. When you colour your walls with calm shades, use darker tones for your bedding or rugs. This will help you create a harmonious space.

Small furniture pieces like accent tables with wooden tones can be a charming complement to your rustic terracotta aesthetic.

Minimal furniture, maximum style

Sometimes we go for furniture items that make our room appear crowded and unwelcoming.

Depending on the size of your room, make sure to go for furniture with a neat look. Opt for beds with a sturdy and gorgeous headboard to make your bedroom feel grand. A pretty nightstand can be useful to keep your essentials, while wardrobes with clean lines can help avoid visual clutter.



Do not compromise on quality and durability. If you are looking for a promising furniture brand with the latest trends, shop at HATIL to get your hands on the best furniture deals!

Fluffy textures to keep it comfy

Textures are a must in bedroom decoration. As the bed is the central point of the room make it cushy and create contrast with lots of layering.

For a warm and comfortable bed, use fabrics like velvet or faux fur on pillows and blankets, and contrast them with cotton or linen sheets.

Incorporate textured rugs, such as a furry or woven design, to add some fuzziness and visual interest to your floor. Throw in some cushions to make it a casual resting nook.

Warm lights for a romantic flair

Lights are super crucial, especially in the bedroom. Like textures, layering your lights can be promising, giving you more control to set different tones according to your mood.

Table lamps are necessary additions for getting some last-minute work done on your bed. Wall scones and spotlights can add depth and warmth to your bedroom. For a radiant vibe in your sanctuary, opt for dimmable pendant lights. Last but not least, opt for a chic chandelier to add timeless luxury!

While redecorating or fixing your new bedroom, ensure it does not empty your paycheck, especially if you are a newlywed and just settling in, opt for HATIL, which is offering EMI (Equated Monthly Instalment) options to help you with a budget-friendly purchase.

By Tasmiah Rahman
Photo: HATIL