



**EDITOR'S NOTE**

**Photo:** Adnan Rahman  
**Model:** Surjo  
**Styling:** Sonia Yeasmin Isha  
**Wardrobe:** Sharmin Rahman  
**Designs**  
"Mahal" - A collection of arabesque inspired Mirpur katan by sharminrahmandesigns x nobo  
**Coordination:** Tasnia & Sushmita  
**Jewellery:** Zevar  
**Makeup:** Piash  
**Location:** Eskay Decor by Saimul Karim (Bashundhara Outlet)

Ours is a nation bold enough to embrace the future while staying true to traditions and culture. The new generation of Bangladeshis has come to realise that lifestyle goes beyond fashion, fitness, and leisure – it is a measure of society's tastes and preferences. The Daily Star has always promoted local artisans. This continues to be our endeavour and in celebration of our 34th anniversary, we take this opportunity to present the pulse of modern living. In this segment, we dive straight into the trends of the fitness industry, the soaring popularity of marathons, the rise in podcasts, the boom of stand-up comedy, etc. We look into the field of contemporary architecture that is creating extraordinary strides, as well as venturing into new territories in interior design that redefine our lives. As the fashion industry continues experimenting, we highlight the shifts in jewellery styling, celebrate unique local motifs, and provide snippets on traditional weaves with ways to reinterpret them. We also delve into the many facets of tourism, an integral part of any country's economic growth. As we conclude, we provide comprehensive insights on purchasing one's first car, the allure of luxury watches as an investment, and much more for those stepping into new chapters of life – curated to meet the needs of a generation ready to embrace both tradition and tomorrow. Enjoy reading the third supplement of The Daily Star's 34th anniversary issue.

**Mahfuz Anam**  
Editor and Publisher  
The Daily Star



# How upcycling is transforming our FASHION INDUSTRY

In recent years, the global fashion landscape has undergone a drastic shift. Fast fashion — a business model that involves mass-producing clothing at low prices — is now under criticism for its devastating impact on the environment. The once-overlooked consequences of mass-produced clothing like polluted waters, overflowing landfills, and exploited labour, have fuelled a growing movement towards sustainable fashion.



For decades, consumers were encouraged to buy more, wear less, and discard quickly. However, as global movements have shed light on the carbon footprint of this culture, many are reconsidering their choices, and Bangladeshis are no exception.

At the heart of this revolution is "upcycling," which involves transforming old clothes into something new (recycling refers to breaking them down into raw materials for reuse). Designers and boutiques can play a pivotal role in promoting sustainable fashion as a lifestyle choice. By incorporating it into their

Dewan's creations extend beyond clothing. She crafts bags, belts, and other accessories from leftover fabric, proving that even the smallest scraps have value. For her, the journey towards sustainability is as much about rethinking habits as it is about preserving resources. The designer's commitment to sustainability is not just a business model — it's a philosophy.

People, for a long time, were unaware of the environmental damage caused by their actions. Without widespread information or platforms like social media, the consequence of pollution was often overlooked. Now, there is a growing sense of regret for having harmed the

**Chondona Dewan, renowned designer and the owner of Chondon, is a name synonymous with patchwork styling. With over 20 years of experience, Dewan has built a reputation for turning fabric waste into stunning sarees, blouses, kameezes, and even home decor items like table runners and bed covers.**

collections, they can demonstrate the potential of discarded materials to become luxurious pieces.

Chondona Dewan, renowned designer and the owner of Chondon, is a name synonymous with patchwork styling. With over 20 years of experience, Dewan has built a reputation for turning fabric waste into stunning sarees, blouses, kameezes, and even home decor items like table runners and bed covers.

"The best part is that we do not waste anything!" she says. "My experience tells me that sustainable fashion is much easier than we make it out to be."

planet so carelessly.

The influence of social media campaigns in promoting sustainable fashion is also undeniable. We have celebrities being applauded for repeating their outfits; various reels on "recreating" outfits also promote the idea of upcycling perfectly.

When it comes to sustainable fashion, instead of pushing an outfit to the far corner of closets, they are taken out and reimagined. Sarees are often the starting point!

"I had a Jamdani that my mother gifted

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## How upcycling is transforming our fashion industry

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me years ago, but the edges started fraying," says Anika, an undergraduate student. "Instead of throwing it away, I turned it into a set of cushion covers and a table runner. Now, every time I look at them, it reminds me of her."

Kameezes and dresses, too, offer opportunities for re-styling. A heavily embroidered kameez that feels outdated can be deconstructed to create chic tops or even trendy fusion shirts.

"I once took an old kameez and had my tailor turn the neckline embroidery into a statement collar for my new top," shares Fahmida, a teacher. Dresses with flared bottoms or A-line cuts can be shortened to create playful and stylish tailored into smart co-ords. Every leftover fabric, every extra piece — all those broad panel designs that come and go with the trend — can be used creatively.

Shaing Shaing U Nini, Faculty and Coordinator at Bandarban University, is one of the creative minds behind the much-talked banana plant fibre, and an advocate for eco-conscious living. The pilot project, however, took a backseat despite its popularity because of lack of funding, promotion, as well as a potential market.

Based on her experience, Nini stresses, "Sustainable fashion is new. It needs to be promoted through governing bodies, as well as diversified product launches, if we want a positive outcome from it."



Her words emphasise the need for systemic change, combining individual efforts with institutional support to make sustainability mainstream.

"Sustainable fashion needs some level of machinery, even if it's handmade," she further adds. Nini explains that while traditional craftsmanship remains the backbone of upcycling in Bangladesh, the integration of technology can help scale these efforts and make them more accessible.

Workshops, exhibitions, and fashion shows can further promote the concept of sustainable fashion. Imagine a runway featuring garments made entirely from recycled fabrics or accessories crafted from discarded materials. Such events not only inspire consumers, but also send a powerful message about the potential of upcycling.

For designers like Chondona Dewan, sustainability is also about preserving heritage.

"There is so much scope for experimenting with upcycling," she says. "We can pull from the past and bring them forward." Her patchwork creations are evidence of this philosophy, blending traditional craftsmanship with contemporary aesthetics.

The future of fashion lies in such stories of creativity and care. As consumers and designers alike embrace upcycling and recycling, they are not only reducing waste but also redefining what it means to be fashionable. "We need this sustainable fashion to be stable," says Chondona Dewan. "And this should be carried forward to the next generation."

What we must understand is that sustainable fashion is more than a trend; it is a movement that challenges us to think differently about what we wear and how we live. By turning waste into wonder, upcycling and recycling offer a pathway to a greener, more thoughtful future. As we rethink the role of fashion in our lives, one thing is clear — the most stylish thing we can wear is our commitment to sustainability.

By Nusrath Jahan  
Photo: Adnan Rahman  
Model: Mashiat  
Styling: Sonia Yeasmin Isha  
Wardrobe: Chondona Dewan  
Jewellery: Shoilee by Tahmina Shaily  
Makeup: Piaash  
Location: Ashraf Kaiser Residence (Arunapalli)





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**Trends come and go, often changing so quickly that it's hard to keep up. However, a shift in the mindset of people in the past couple of years has led to fast fashion losing its allure, making way for a more thoughtful and sustainable approach to style. In the context of Bangladesh, this opens up the possibility of traditional weaves gaining renewed attention, not just as relics of the past, but as treasures that align perfectly with the global push toward slow, ethical fashion. From the intricacy of Jamdani and Benarasi to the earthy charm of Khadi, Bangladeshi fabrics offer incomparable variation. These handwoven textiles are not only sustainable but also incredibly adaptable. However, the idea that they can be transformed into an array of modern silhouettes, from clothing to accessories and even decor items, remains somewhat unexplored.**



#### A LEGACY

Bangladesh has long been acknowledged as the heart of artistic textile production. The Jamdani – an outstanding example of handwoven art that has been recognised by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage – is one of its crown jewels. Renowned around the world for its unmatched softness and transparency, Muslin became a weave of wonder. With elaborate patterns in silk and gold threads, the luxurious Katan and Benarasi weaves became mainstays for weddings and festivities.

Equally significant is Khadi, a fabric deeply rooted in the rural handloom tradition. Its coarse yet durable texture made it the fabric of the masses, embodying a spirit of self-reliance.

Designer Chandana Dewan, renowned for her patchwork on bold and vibrant colours, explains, "Traditionally and historically, these motifs and designs were developed for sarees because they were the most widely chosen outfits by women of the time."

Worn in various draping styles depending on the region and occasion, sarees allowed for flexibility and creativity, while showcasing the beauty of traditional weaves and motifs. The patterns on these sarees were not chosen randomly. Each had meaning: floral designs represented prosperity, geometric shapes signified balance, and intricate paisleys symbolised fertility.

The 6 to 9 yards of fabric were more a form of self-expression than just a garment. Sharmin Rahman, another noted designer, adds, "Saree became the epitome of feminine grace. Instead of small, cut-to-tailor outfits, our artisans became habituated to crafting long yards of fabric which, again, presents an opportunity to diversify and adapt."

The saree's prevalence ensured that these motifs thrived. However, as societal norms and fashion preferences began to shift, so did the use of these fabrics and patterns.

Dewan, who works closely with sustainable fashion, emphasises, "An evolution is underway, with creative and varied use of traditional motifs and weaves already. This movement needs to continue."

#### A CHANGING FASHION LANDSCAPE

The 20th century brought significant changes to the way Bangladeshi women dressed. The introduction of the shalwar kameez, jeans and shirts, offered a more practical alternative to the saree, especially for younger women and working professionals. This shift was further amplified by the increasing influence of Indian or Pakistani fashion into mainstream wardrobes. However, this challenge also presented an opportunity to rethink how these heritage textiles could be adapted to suit modern tastes.

Designer Tenzing Chakma believes that the shift in rethinking and redesigning traditional weaves stems from necessity and creative evolution. "To keep our heritage alive, we must adapt it to modern lifestyles," he explains. "A new design is costly – it takes time, labour, and precision. But for this shift to succeed, we must prioritise accessibility over immediate profit."

For instance, by weaving Jamdani motifs into cotton fabrics, designers can make them budget-friendly and practical. Incorporating these textiles into kameezes, short kurtis, even shirts allow them to transition seamlessly into everyday wardrobes.

"If we want these fabrics to thrive, they must be wearable and usable," he emphasises. "Luxury pieces will always exist, but for our weavers to truly sustain themselves, their craft needs a place in everyday fashion."

Sharmin Rahman, on the other hand, explains how each of our traditional fabrics can be transformed into fashion statements for any occasion – "Think of a skirt made of Khadi, or a shirt made of Katan? How would a Jamdani wedding gown look and feel? The answer is: Absolutely regal!"



## MODERN STYLES WITH TRADITIONAL FABRICS A sustainable approach





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STYLES WITH  
TRADITIONAL  
FABRICS:  
A sustainable  
approach**



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Rahman stresses how it is natural for people to lack the vision, but a responsibility for designers to bring these ideas to life. Azim Uddula is one of the designers rising to the challenge.

"When leather and faux leather are paired with local fabrics like Katan, Benarasi, silk, and Jamdani, they find unique expressions in bomber jackets, motorbike jackets, and other styles, appearing as linings, back panels, sleeves, or front details," he explains.

The traces of his inspiration can be seen in his latest collection, featuring leather jackets, adorned with a patchwork of Jamdani weaves, Benarasi patterns, and intricate motifs adding a pleasant burst of colours to casual winter wear.

Azim states, "My winter collection is a heartfelt attempt to highlight the richness of our heritage while ensuring the sustainability of our local fabrics, both locally and internationally."

This fusion of traditional and contemporary elements not only preserves the heritage of these weaves, but also makes them relevant to a global audience. Jamdani motifs can now adorn A-line skirts and peplum tops, while Khadi can be used to craft chic trench coats and blazers. Katan silks, once reserved for bridal sarees, may be repurposed into

evening gowns and crop tops.

**EXPANDING THE CANVAS**

The revival of traditional weaves is not limited to fashion. Designers are also exploring their potential in interior décor and lifestyle products. Khadi, with its earthy texture, makes for beautiful cushion covers and throws, while Katan's intricate patterns can be used for table runners and wall art.

According to Rahman, Jamdani curtains are bound to bring an unmatched aesthetic touch to your home decor. As curtains are not something we wash regularly, one set of curtains will last at least a couple of years before they need replacing.

Purses and clutches crafted from Jamdani, Katan, or Khadi have become prevalent with popular designer brands, blending traditional patterns with modern designs. However, when it comes to jewellery, the trend has been more inconsistent.

To carve a permanent place in people's hearts, designers have taken it upon themselves to combine traditional fabrics with contemporary aesthetics of oxidised metal or brass, offering wearable pieces of cultural heritage that resonate with modern sensibilities.

**THE ROAD AHEAD**

While the revival of traditional

Bangladeshi weaves is an exciting journey, it's not without its challenges.

Designers Sharmin Rahman and Silmat Chisti, both advocates for sustainable fashion, shed light on the struggles faced by the weaving industry and how the fashion industry, with the right support, can help overcome them.

For Rahman, the biggest hurdle is infrastructure. "We simply don't have the facilities to meet the international factory standards required by global buyers."

She stresses, "Even if they are interested in our weaves, they are bound by legal regulations, and that keeps them from investing. This is where government intervention is crucial. We need policy-level support to modernise our production facilities without compromising the integrity of handwoven fabrics."

Chisti, on the other hand, emphasises the untapped potential of handloom textiles. "The greatest strength of our industry is its diversity," she says. "Bangladesh is home to countless weaver clusters specialising in everything from Jamdani to silk and cotton. But this potential is stifled by some glaring gaps."

One such gap, according to Chisti, is the lack of consistent access to quality yarn. As they are not cultivated regularly, this naturally obstructs the production.

Chisti also highlights the importance of empowering artisans. "The talent is

there, but we haven't created enough opportunities for them. If we can build a bridge to international buyers, handloom weaving could become a significant source of income for the country."

In her view, awareness is the key. "People need to understand the beauty and value of handloom fabrics; where to buy them, how to wear them, and how choosing handloom supports both sustainability and our cultural heritage."

The future of Bangladeshi weaves is not just about preserving tradition, but also about gaining a global audience. Designers, artisans, and policymakers all have a role to play in ensuring that these fabrics not only survive but thrive.

As the world embraces sustainable fashion, the time is ripe for Bangladesh to lead the way. By rethinking traditional weaves and motifs, we are not just celebrating our past — we are weaving a legacy for generations to come.

By Nusrath Jahan

Photo: Adnan Rahman

Model: Joly

Styling: Sonia Yeasmin Isha

Wardrobe: Sozpodor Indigenous Textile

by Tenzing Chakma

Jewellery: Shoilee by Tahmina Shaily

Makeup: Piash

Location: Ashraf Kaiser Residence (Arunapalli)



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# Exploring the rich history of Bangladeshi textile motifs

When you think of a motif, what visuals first come to mind? Perhaps, delicate paisley unfurling like budding flowers, reminiscent of the intricate designs in Jamdani sarees. Or, a geometric lattice mimicking the symmetry of a temple carving. Our traditional patterns are unique in their terms, carrying the whispers of a thousand hands that have weaved them.

Motifs are not mere decorative elements; they are powerful symbols and visual language etched into the folds of our textiles, the patterns on pottery, and even the moulds for traditional sweets like sandesh. Still, their story is not confined to tradition alone. Many contemporary designers are reimagining and adapting them to modern tastes and finding inspiration in everything from Islamic geometric patterns to Celtic art, blending local craftsmanship with global influences.

But what is the origin? How did they evolve to symbolise the cultural identity of Bangladesh? To understand their significance, we must journey back in time.

## ART ROOTED IN NATURE

"Initially, the primary inspiration came from the natural world," says Chandra Shekhar Shaha, a prominent designer, a leading expert on Bangladeshi crafts and the author of the book, *Sandesh*.

Since time immemorial, the fertile landscape of Bangladesh, teeming with rivers, flora, and fauna, has served as an inexhaustible source of inspiration for artisans. First, nature's patterns were observed, reimagined and then, transformed into symbolic art.

In his book, *Sandesh*, Shaha offers thought-provoking insights into their origin.

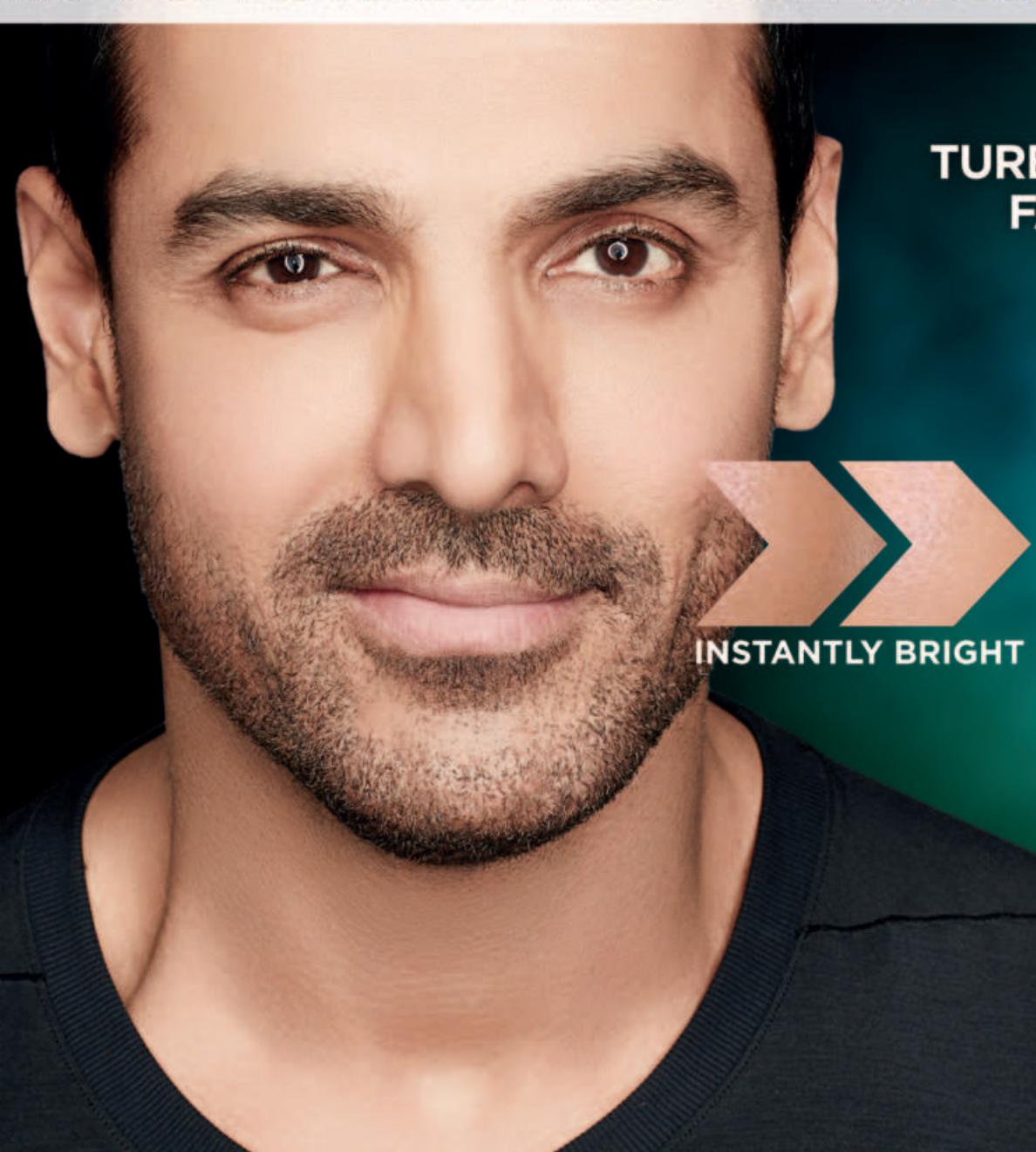
"Once discovered through meditative contemplation, nature became a canvas for the artistic spirit of ancient people. These totem-believing communities, particularly the focused minds of women engaged in ritual art, intertwined their devotion with artistic expression. Thus, motifs were born."

Take, for example, the lotus – which we find in Jamdani sarees – goes beyond

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## Exploring the rich history of Bangladeshi textile motifs

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its aesthetic appeal; it holds deep cultural and spiritual meaning in our culture, symbolising purity and resilience, as the lotus flower thrives in muddy waters despite adversaries.

Likewise, a recurring theme in both Jamdani and Nakshi Kantha — the fish — mirrors the agrarian and riverine lifestyle of the region's people. Numerous geometric shapes have also found their way into the artistic lexicon, often inspired by the symmetry and patterns seen in temples, mosques, or even honeycombs.

On elaborating on the process of creating designs, Shaha details, "A dot moving in different directions and style, returning to the point of origin, completes a journey. In the process, a motif is created."

But they are much more than a dot — these simple forms, when repeated

Bangladeshi textiles are a living canvas and motifs have been used as a vivid storytelling medium to depict history, culture, and artistry.

Yet, they are equally global, and books like *4000 Flower & Plant Motifs: A Sourcebook* by Graham Leslie McCallum offer invaluable insights into the global influence of local patterns. As highlighted by McCallum, the universal appeal of plant and floral designs, which transcend cultures and eras, has inspired designers and artists alike. Therefore, while deeply rooted in local traditions, Bangladeshi motifs have not existed in isolation.

Today, Bangladeshi designers are reimagining traditional motifs to cater to modern sensibilities — one of them being Sharmin Rahman, a prominent designer. Rahman is working with Islamic symbols, characterised by geometric and symmetrical patterns.

have been able to protect the authenticity of Jamdani only because we stayed true to the design. Artisans know the designs by heart — patterns inherited from previous generations — but they never try to change. Nor should we."

Further illustrating his point with a striking analogy, Shaha explains, "When you speak only Bangla, you are staying loyal to the Bengali language. However, if you try to mix it with other languages, the by-product will be disastrous for the language. At one point, you won't be able to find the original language. The same principle applies to motifs. If we try to blend them without understanding their essence, they risk losing their identity entirely."

Jamdani and Nakshi Kantha motifs have endured the test of time, while many others have been lost, as highlighted by Shaha. The remaining traditional motifs we have now need documentation and preservation.

"Many motifs were lost because we couldn't preserve them. We need to be mindful that this does not happen in the future," laments Rahman.

### WEAVING STORIES INTO THE FABRIC OF TIME

With progress, we are embracing modernity, and so does our fashion industry. But no matter how modern we become, the designs — passed down to us from our ancestors — will never fade away, which has been showcased by our contemporary designers. Whether paisleys adorn the Jamdani sarees or jackets, they remain as beautiful as the day they were created. However, the main challenge lies in balancing innovation with authenticity.

While working with motifs, we need to tread with care as they are not just designs, but cultural treasures that demand respect and understanding. To experiment without comprehension risks losing the very essence that makes them meaningful.

Let us hope that with dedicated artisans, thoughtful designers, and a renewed appreciation for heritage, Bangladeshi motifs may find new voices in a globalised world.

**By Ayman Anika**

Photo: Adnan Rahman

Model: Surjo

Styling: Sonia Yeasmin Isha

Wardrobe: Sharmin Rahman Designs

"Mahal" - A collection of arabesque

inspired Mirpur katan by

sharminrahmandesigns x nobo

Coordination: Tasnia & Sushmita

Jewellery: Zavar

Makeup: Piash

Location: Eskay Decor by Saimul

Karim (Bashundhara Outlet)



and interwoven, became complex compositions and thus, originate designs that can convey ideas and emotions.

With time, shapes evolved, which involved the continuous layering of cultural influences, as traders and rulers from other parts of the world brought new ideas to the region.

The Mughals, for instance, introduced the paisley, or *kalka*, which quickly gained popularity in textile design. Over time, the teardrop shape of *kalka* — often adorned with floral elements — was blended by artisans with local patterns, creating variations that were distinctly Bangladeshi. This organic blending of nature and culture has been called "motif family" by Shaha.

Thus, they were birthed in nature and subsequently nurtured by artisans of the region. Whether it is the design of a lotus flower, hilsa or a sandesh, they encapsulate the harmony between humanity and its environment. They became a cultural symbol with time — a way to express identity and creativity.

### THE MANY FACES

We can all unanimously agree that

She says, "I was inspired by the play of light and shadow in Islamic motifs at The British Museum in London. It reminded me of the *zari* work in Mirpur Benarasi sarees. Collaborating with design masters, we developed sarees featuring designs on satin katan, creating a blend of tradition and modernity."

This fusion approach ensures that motifs remain relevant and resonate with diverse audiences, bridging the gap between tradition and innovation.

Recently, people have been inclined more towards minimalist designs. Rahman notes, "We can adapt motifs on varieties of clothes, it doesn't necessarily have to be a traditional wear. You can have paisley embroidered on the corner of a jacket and it looks elegant."

So, with changing times, traditional shapes and designs have now found their place in contemporary fashion. Many fashion designers are now reviving the age-old patterns by including them in various clothing styles — for example, kurtas, scarves, and even jeans.

However, Shaha cautions against mindless experimentation, stating, "We



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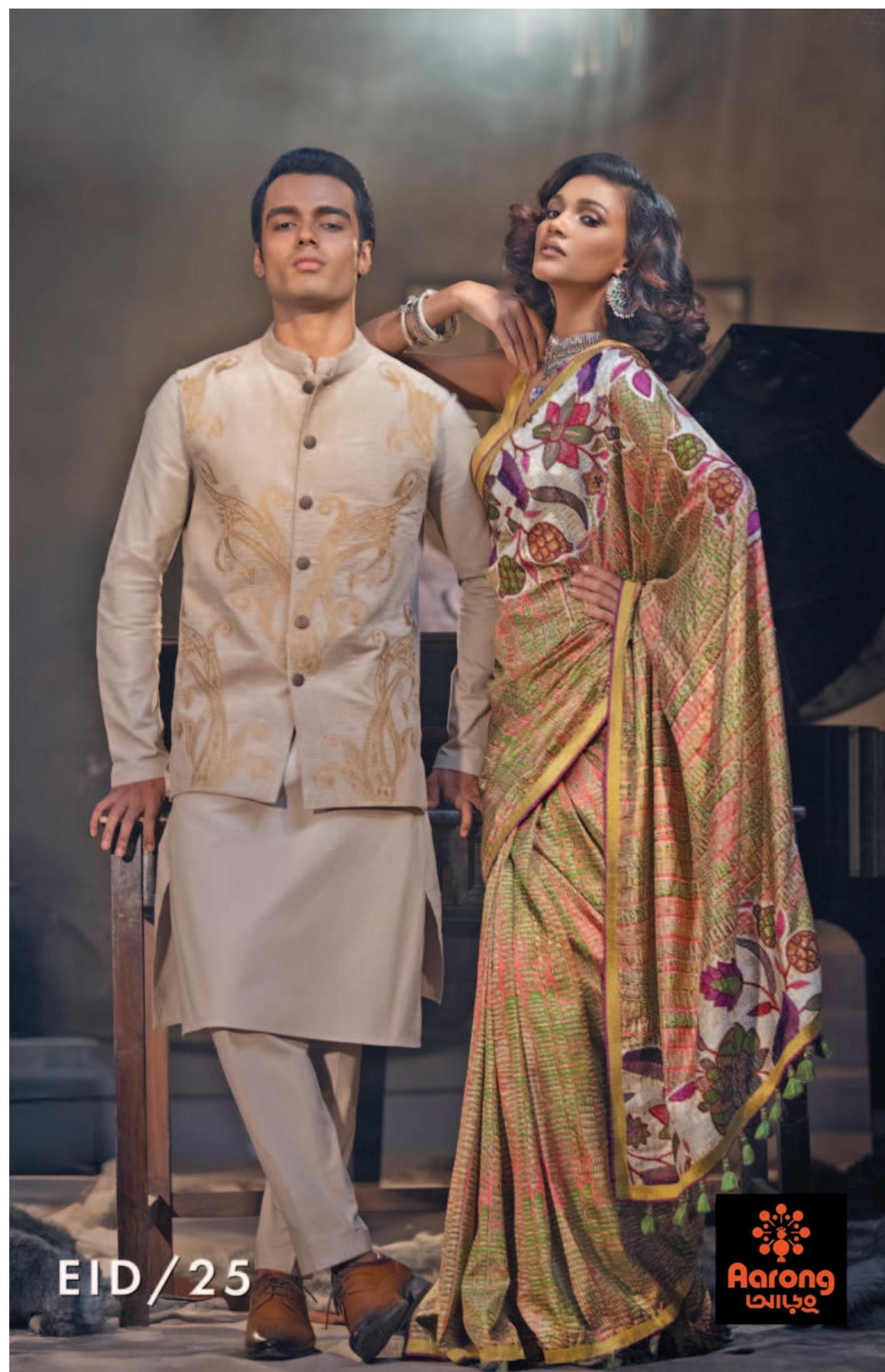
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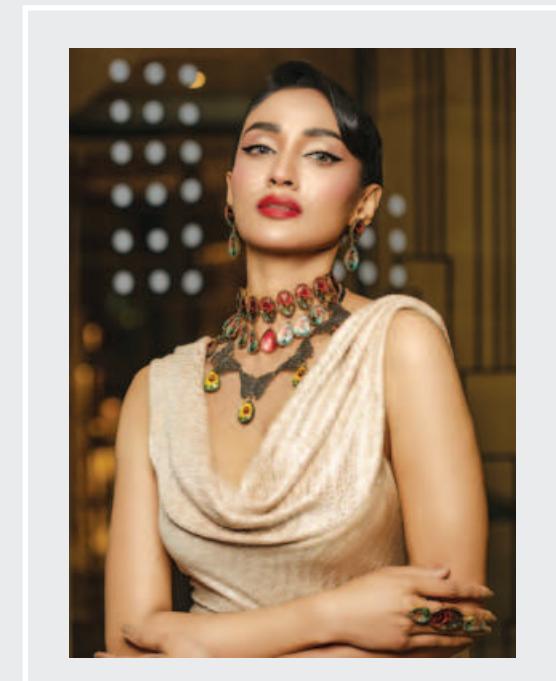
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# How modern materials are shaping the TRADITIONAL JEWELLERY SCENE

The jewellery market in Bangladesh is experiencing a remarkable transformation. Once synonymous with gold and silver, the country's fashion scene is now embracing bold innovations and diverse materials, catering to both traditional sensibilities and modern preferences. Whether it's for grand occasions or everyday wear, gold and silver are no longer the go-to options.

For generations, gold was the cornerstone of jewellery. Chains, bangles, earrings, and necklaces made of gold were not just adornments; they symbolised status, security, and a family heirloom. Silver also has its roots deeply intertwined with the daily lives of women in rural and urban communities alike. Silver anklets and nose rings carried a rustic charm, reflecting the simplicity and grace of their lives. However, just like gold, the prominence of silver jewellery began to wane with changing lifestyles.



know what clothes, accessories and jewellery reflect their personality and that is exactly what they want to bring forward."

Gold and silver often lose value when melted and/or remade due to having a low melting point. This factor, combined with the current price range, makes the idea of updating or remaking an old piece of jewellery sound like a bad idea. This is not a problem with imitation jewellery.

In fact, Shoilee is one of the brands that offer a unique re-plating option for customers. Shaily explains, "If you've bought a piece of silver-plated jewellery from us, after a number of uses you can bring it back to us. We will re-plate it into a gold plated necklace."

## CHANGING TIMES

Gold jewellery was historically valued as a form of financial security. For middle-class families especially, it served as a financial safety net, a quick source of cash during any emergency. Now, with gold prices soaring to unprecedented levels and imitation jewellery not having much of a resale value, this once-practical investment has become unattainable for many.

Apart from the financial aspect, changing lifestyles and evolving tastes have also played a critical role.

Designer Mehnaz Ahmed, the creative force behind the brand "Glued Together," has spent the past decade designing ornaments with a deep reverence for heritage. Drawing inspiration from the eras of her mother and grandmother, Mehnaz's latest "Noksha Collection" pays homage to the timeless elegance of vintage Bangladeshi pieces while incorporating a modern twist.

"Just like Multani of Pakistan, Rajasthani and Jaipuri jewellery of India, Bangladeshi artisans have their signature created in the intricacy of noksha designs," she explains. "This collection of Glued Together is a reflection of the beauty and craftsmanship that shaped the generations before me."

Traditional gold and silver designs, though timeless, often lack the variety that modern consumers crave.

"Perhaps the biggest difference nowadays is that women know themselves very well," stresses Tahmina Khan Shaily, the heart and creative mind behind the beautiful creations of Shoilee, a jewellery outlet. "They

Sk Sujana Suria, jewellery designer and owner of Baaish Boshonto, also explains how it's easier to make minor changes in imitation jewellery. "I offer customised designs as well as sizes for jewellery. Customers can choose unique patterns, colours, and materials to create personalised pieces."

Designers are now experimenting with materials like faux stones, enamel, and mixed metals, offering unique, affordable pieces that cater to a wider audience. Moreover, advancements in technology have allowed imitation jewellery to mimic the look of real stones and precious metals with astonishing accuracy.

## REDEFINING LOCAL ARTISANSHIP

One of the most significant outcomes of this shift has been the resurgence of local craftsmanship. As consumers turn toward alternative materials, artisans have found new avenues to explore their creativity.

"Even techniques that were once exclusive to gold can now be replicated with other materials," says Mehnaz. "I've found that Minakari, one of the signature gold patterns, can be done on mixed metals, making it more affordable and accessible without compromising on beauty."

As consumers divert to buying local, they not only support homegrown talent but also ensure that their purchases reflect Bangladesh's unique cultural heritage.

Materials like brass, copper, wood, and

terracotta have proven to be versatile, lending themselves to intricate designs that rival the beauty of traditional gold and silver. The affordability of these materials also means that consumers can own a larger variety of jewellery without breaking the bank.

This shift has been especially empowering for younger buyers, who now have the freedom to experiment with their changing style without the heavy investment that gold or silver requires.

## OVERCOMING THE STIGMA

There was a time when imitation jewellery was seen as inferior, associated with poor craftsmanship, and short lifespans, but that perception has changed dramatically. Advances in materials and techniques have ensured that today's imitation pieces are durable, visually stunning, and crafted with as much care as traditional jewellery.

Brides, in particular, are embracing this trend, opting for lightweight and customisable options that complement their outfits without weighing them down, literally or financially.

"The making of bridal jewellery is a journey of its own," Shaily adds with a smile. "We set up multiple consultations, sketching, undoing and redoing the elements as per the bride's vision of herself."

Mehnaz Ahmed stresses on the quality of colour coating on her pieces. When discussing the misconceptions surrounding the quality of imitation jewellery, she says, "What we knew as 'City Gold' no longer exists in our market."

The gold jewellery features a 21-karat gold plating, while the silver coating is designed to remain intact for 7 to 9 years.

It is not only the quality of making but also the usage that decides the durability of these pieces. Suria of Baaish Boshonto believes that jewellery, be it gold or imitation, should be handled with care.

"We should avoid contact with water, perfume, and chemicals, while storing it in airtight containers to prevent moisture. Cleaning should be done gently with a soft cloth and pieces should be kept separate to prevent scratches."

The changing jewellery landscape in Bangladesh reflects a broader shift in consumer preferences toward sustainability, affordability, and individuality. While gold and silver will always hold a special place in people's hearts, there is room for more diverse expressions of artistry.

This transformation not only benefits both consumers, but also artisans. Where once experienced in conventional gold and silver designs only, artisans are finding new opportunities to showcase their skills, and consumers are discovering the joy of owning jewellery that's not only beautiful, but reflects their choice perfectly.

As the industry continues to evolve, one thing is clear: jewellery is no longer confined to tradition.

It's a vibrant, living art form that reflects the spirit of a nation constantly reinventing itself. From grand wedding sets to everyday statement pieces, the possibilities are now endless.

By Nusrath Jahan

Photo: Adnan Rahman

Model: Tangia Zaman

Methila

Styling: Sonia Yeasmin

Isha

Wardrobe: Jealous

Tomato

Jewellery: Shoilee by

Tahmina Shaily

Makeup: Piash

Location: Le

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**"In the making of chamcham, we use fresh milk, sugar, and a touch of flour, but nothing artificial. I believe that this simplicity of ingredients gives the sweet its signature taste, texture, and impressive shelf life. A properly made chamcham stays fresh for days without refrigeration," informs Ghosh.**

The aroma of caramelised sugar and boiling milk envelopes you the moment you set foot in a sweets factory in Tangail. Workers are seen moving in unison — some diligently stirring the milk over open flames, while others sit in corners skillfully shaping soft, spongy, and light-as-air *chhana* balls with their hands, which will soon become the legendary chamcham. It is the dedication and trained hands of these artisans that have made the Porabari chamcham a household name in the country for generations.

#### THE ORIGINS

"The story of chamcham stretches back nearly 200 years, but the exact records are scarce. Nevertheless, I can say for sure that the name Porabari chamcham originates from the village of Porabari, located about six or seven kilometres from Pachani Bazar," shares Swapna Ghosh, proprietor of JoyKali Mistanna Bhandar and Vice-President of the Tangail Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

According to Ghosh, the popularity of this village, and in turn, the chamcham itself, can be credited to a



small but busy river port (located in Porabari) in the British era where goods-laden steamers and launches anchored regularly.

"A bustling steamer terminal at Porabari, in the past, played a vital role in distributing the sweets far and wide. However, after the river dried up, many of these businesses moved to Pachani Bazar, where my family has been operating our sweet shop for generations," he elaborates.

Ghosh proudly shared that his business, JoyKali Mistanna Bhandar, has been making sweets for 85 years. The sweet shop was first set up by his father and after him, Ghosh took over. With hope in his eyes and an infectious

smile, he said his son is ready to carry the business forward.

Years ago — like Ghosh's family — humble sweet makers of Tangail, started to experiment with *chhana* (curdled milk) and sugar syrup, and the result was a masterpiece — a cylindrical and spongy sweet that was neither too dense nor too soft, but just perfect. The praise of this delectable creation spread like wildfire and now, people from all over the country pour into Tangail to get a taste of the legendary chamcham of Porabari.

#### SO, WHAT MAKES CHAMCHAM UNIQUE?

The magic of chamcham lies perhaps in its meticulous preparation. It is an art that demands precision, patience,

and experience. And unlike many other sweets that rely on external flavourings, the authentic taste of milk and sugar is the star of Porabari chamcham.

"In the making of chamcham, we use fresh milk, sugar, and a touch of flour, but nothing artificial. I believe that this simplicity of ingredients gives the sweet its signature taste, texture, and impressive shelf life. A properly made chamcham stays fresh for days without refrigeration," informs Ghosh.

The heart of chamcham is the

freshly prepared curdled milk and then the *chhana* is kneaded thoroughly to achieve the perfect consistency. It is a labour-intensive and entirely manual process.

Ghosh credits the uniqueness of chamcham to the natural ingredients and traditional preparation methods: "The secret lies in the precise balance of *chhana*, sugar, and flour. Previously, we have experimented with machines. However, they failed to handle the delicate *chhana* properly, which is the soul of the chamcham. Every piece is shaped by the hands of our artisans, preserving its authenticity."

After smooth doughs are made, a small amount of flour is added to enhance the texture. Beautiful oval cylinders are made from the dough — purely by hand — and then are boiled in delicious sugar syrup. Chamcham is mainly cooked in caramelised sugar syrup, unlike most other sweets, and this gives it a rich golden-brown hue and a slightly smoky undertone. A final garnish of *mawa* (reduced milk solids) is added to elevate the flavour of chamcham to new heights.

#### CHALLENGES IN PASSING DOWN THE LEGACY

In our culture, sweets are perceived as a quintessential gift during important occasions from family gatherings and weddings to religious festivals. The chamcham of Porabari is undoubtedly one of the most sought-after sweets for gifting, largely because of its durability, as mentioned by Swapna Ghosh.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15



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## The challenges facing Porabari chamcham's authenticity today

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

However, Ghosh has highlighted a pressing issue affecting the taste of the sweet, a challenge equally faced by many traditional sweet makers: "I have heard people complaining that sweets don't taste the same as before and their quality is degrading. I believe that the root cause of this issue lies in the milk. Cows used to graze on organic Bermuda grass – also known as Dhruba grass but today, they are fed artificial diets, and with

wetlands and greenery disappearing, the quality of milk is not what it once was. This, in turn, negatively affects the richness of our sweets."

The chamcham of Porabari, despite its rich history and widespread fame, now faces numerous challenges, and it is primarily due to the rise

of mass-produced sweets, which has led to a decline in the number of skilled artisans making chamcham using traditional methods. Now and then, we see sweets labelled as "chamcham" in markets; however, in reality, they do not follow the authentic recipe of Porabari, leading to a dilution of its unique taste.

Although the fame of chamcham has spread far beyond Tangail, with Bengali communities overseas longing for its authentic taste, exporting this sweet remains a significant challenge.

Ghosh highlights, "There is a considerable demand for chamcham in Europe and America. However, for us, exporting still remains a logistical challenge. All over Bangladesh, we distribute our sweets, but when it comes to sending them abroad, there are several restrictions. For a time, we even exported our sweets to Japan. However, we stopped exporting at one point."

According to Ghosh, due to the need for fresh ingredients and careful preservation, large-scale exports have not been feasible for sweet makers. A handful of customers often carry the sweets with them when they travel, but a streamlined export process remains a

notable hurdle.

### GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION (GI) RECOGNITION AND ITS IMPACT

The chamcham of Porabari received the Geographical Indication (GI) recognition, which officially distinguished it as a unique product

protect traditional practices and prevent counterfeit production. However, no noteworthy steps were taken to preserve the authenticity of chamcham. We need stronger enforcement of validity, greater promotion, and financial incentives for local sweet makers for the GI tag to be truly impactful. Otherwise, the tag will just be another recognition that will go to waste.

To reinforce the status of Porabari chamcham as a premium Bengali sweet, nationwide and international campaign can be incredibly beneficial, as it will not only increase sales but will make young confectioners aware of the traditional methods and the significance of chamcham.

With its rich history, unique taste, and most importantly, GI recognition, the Porabari chamcham continues to hold a special place in the hearts of sweet lovers across Bangladesh and beyond. Therefore, it is our responsibility to ensure that this beloved sweet can reach even greater heights and remain a treasured delicacy for generations to come.

By Ayman Anika  
Photo: Shadab Shahrokh Hai  
Location: JoyKali Mistanna Bhandar



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# RUNNING MARATHONS

## Transforming lifestyles, inspiring communities

UCR Half Marathon 2024 (Edition-3)

Bangladesh is now witnessing a new wave of enthusiasm for running. What started as a solo activity has become widespread, reflecting a collective effort to prioritise health and well-being.

A marathon covers 42.2 km; however, many people casually refer to any running event as a "marathon." Ultra-marathons refer to races that go beyond the standard distance; these challenges can cover distances such as 50 km, 100 km, or even a staggering 200 km!

Starting with large-scale events like the Cox's Bazar International Half Marathon

and the Dhaka International Half Marathon, the running culture has grown significantly and now offers much more.

#### THE LANGUAGE OF DISTANCE

AKM Ahsan Ullah, an ultra-runner and a recent finisher of the Chicago Marathon. He explains, "Running is the easiest sport that everyone can participate in. You can run, fast walk, or even just walk — there's no judgment. It's all about being yourself."

He adds, "There are so many more events now compared to 2018 — the year I started. Joining these events with communities feels incredible. It's like a big get-together

that ends with achievement and pride."

The marathon movement in Bangladesh goes beyond personal fitness. It has become a tool for transformation. Marathons and other running events often double as platforms to raise awareness about issues like climate change or saving heritage. The increasing participation of women, children, and the elderly in running events is particularly encouraging, defying traditional norms and promoting positivity.

"It's been 9 years since I started running, and for most of that time, I was

always solo. But now, with the rise of running communities, everything feels different. Joining these vibrant groups has changed my experience entirely," shares fresh Zaker, the noted actor.

"What's even more exciting is how running events have become so frequent and well-organised. It's no longer just a regular occasion — it feels like a festival! The streets come alive with energy, excitement, and determination as runners from all walks of life come together, each targeting their personal best."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

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From the capital to the countryside, marathons are happening everywhere in Bangladesh

## Running marathons: Transforming lifestyles, inspiring communities

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

"There's something magical about these moments. It's not just about fitness anymore — it's about connection, celebration, and pushing boundaries. Events like these make me feel like I'm witnessing Dhaka at its absolute best!" he adds.

### NUMBERS THAT INSPIRE

The Dhaka Half by Dhaka Run Lords has played a significant role in shaping the growth of distance running in Bangladesh. At the time, running events in Bangladesh lacked international standards. Accurately measuring race distances, timing events, providing quality medals and jerseys, and organising marathons in Dhaka and beyond — all of these were major challenges.

A group of passionate volunteers then joined together to organise the Dhaka Half Marathon 2018. This event marked a milestone as the first race initiated by a running community in Bangladesh.

In the years that followed, numerous organisations were born and events held, inspiring new runners and keeping the standards of races nationwide. While many successful sporting events have since gained



recognition, the Dhaka Half remains a pioneering effort that laid the foundation for the country's growing running culture.

In a word, the journey of Bangladesh's running culture took a significant turn in 2018, and the numbers kept growing ever since.

"Only 100 to 150 participants showed up in the first event organised by UCR, 4-5 years ago," shares Muhammad Masum, the founder of

Ultra Camp Runners, UCR. "The growth has been phenomenal. By 2024, the number of runners increased to 1,800, and our most recent event saw a staggering 2,300 participants!"

Masum believes the rise in the number is also linked to growing health awareness.

"Doctors now recommend at least 30 minutes of running or walking daily for a healthier lifestyle. This advice has particularly motivated

people, aged 40 and above, who are joining in large numbers to improve their health and redefine their way of living," Masum explains.

Many runners are also inspired by friends and colleagues who have already participated in the events. For some, collecting medals as souvenirs adds to their motivation. Unlike many sports, running marathons involve no designated playgrounds or equipment. You can run anywhere, anytime!

### RUNNING BEYOND THE ROADS

Marathons are no longer limited to the capital; they are rapidly gaining popularity in other districts as well. Communities across the country are embracing running as a way to promote health, fitness, and unity. Events outside Dhaka are seeing remarkable growth.

Recently, the Brahmanbaria Half Marathon 2025 brought together 400 plus runners from 45 districts, with an increased number of participations from past years. Founding admin of Brahmanbaria Runner's Community, Ali Ahad Ratan shares, "The goal is to organise a full marathon next year."

Among the inspiring stories, an amazing teacher student duo caught the attention at the event. Mahdi

Hasan, a 12-year-old madrasa student, who crossed the finish line side-by-side with his teacher, M M Tazul Islam.

"I always encourage my students to stay fit," shared Islam. "Mahdi has always been passionate about sports and I hope more of my students will join in the future."

Similarly, events like the Shamshernagar Ultra Trail Marathon at Shamshernagar Tea Garden, and the Rajkandi Hill 25K at Rajkandi Forest, Sylhet Division are making waves.

The main person behind the events, Abdul Basit, shares — "Whether it's a hilly trail or a challenging road, runners are embracing these tests of endurance, which has boosted marathon participation in any district outside Dhaka."

As participation numbers rise and new milestones are set, running marathons continues to inspire individuals to lead healthier lives and fosters a sense of unity across generations and communities. With each step taken, Bangladesh is not only embracing fitness but also paving the way for a future filled with shared achievements and vibrant energy.

By Jawwad Sami Neogi  
Photo: Courtesy



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# How personal fitness trainers are changing local health trends

Personal fitness trainers had the reputation of being reserved for the elite and the affluent. In recent times, they have quietly slipped into the everyday lives of many Bangladeshis, shedding their once-exclusive reputation. One might believe it to be another passing trend. However, given the trajectory of fitness culture in the country, it's a clear sign of how people are starting to rethink their priorities, placing health and wellness at the forefront, in a world where urban chaos often takes its toll.

## FITNESS GETS PERSONAL

For years, gyms in Bangladesh were places you went to use some equipment, maybe jog on a treadmill, and then leave. Guidance was not a part of the package.

Nuran Durdana is a trainer at CrossFit Assemble. She, along with many others,

of their unhealthy routines.

## FROM STRUGGLE TO PASSION

For most trainers, their work stems from their fitness journeys. Durdana remembers seeing people struggle and feeling the urge to help.

"They didn't know where to start," she says. "I realised that someone needed to step up and provide the guidance they were looking for."

Anan Izar shares a similar motivation. "I'd watch people trying hard at the gym but missing out on results because they lacked proper guidance. That's what pushed me to take on this role," he says.

"I've worked with people from all walks of life over the years. Their stories, their progress — that's what keeps me going," says Biswas, whose journey goes

back even further.

He began working part-time at Techno Fitness Limited in Chattogram before moving on to Radisson Blu Dhaka.

For all three trainers, it's clear that the reward lies not just in their clients' transformations, but also in the connections they have built along the way.

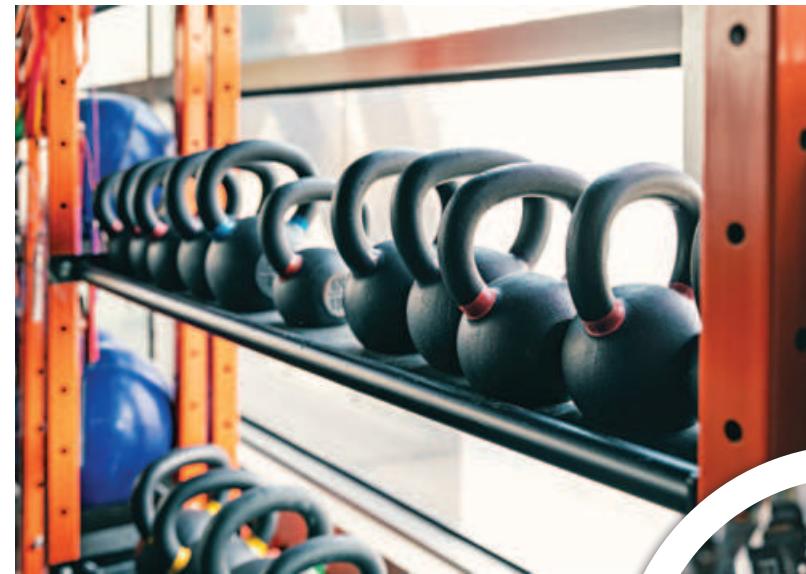
## The social media factor

Social media's role in the rise of personal trainers in Bangladesh cannot be ignored. Platforms like Instagram and Facebook have turned fitness into a cultural movement.

"People want to look good and feel strong," says Durdana. "Social media makes fitness visible and inspires others to take it seriously."

It's not just about appearance. Events like marathons, trekking trips, and adventure sports are nudging people towards fitness. "These activities require preparation and that's where trainers come in," Biswas explains.

The growing interest in personal training has also been fuelled by the increasingly sedentary lifestyles of people. Long work hours and relentless commutes have left many searching for structured fitness solutions to break out



## THE PRICE TAG PROBLEM

While personal training is gaining popularity, it's still not cheap. "It's expensive for most Bangladeshis," admits Durdana. She suggests group sessions or online training packages as cost-effective alternatives.

Izar believes that flexible pricing could make a big difference. "We need to find ways to make training accessible without cutting corners," he says.

Biswas has an even broader vision. "Community-led health initiatives like free fitness sessions in parks could be a game changer. Corporate wellness programmes could also make fitness more accessible to working professionals," he suggests.

However, accessibility is not just about money, it's also about reaching people outside of major cities. Expanding virtual training options could bring fitness solutions to rural areas.

## Beyond Physical Fitness

The definition of fitness is being redefined by today's personal trainers. Izar asserts that physical training is only one piece of the puzzle. One also needs to consider mental and nutritional health.

Durdana strongly supports this all-encompassing strategy. "Your physique isn't the only aspect of fitness. To bring about long lasting change, it's about bringing your body, mind, and behaviours into harmony."

Customising his programmes to each client's needs, Biswas often works with those recovering from injuries. "A one-size-fits-all approach is not feasible. Everyone's journey is different," he says.

This broader focus on wellness is transforming trainers into mentors, guiding their clients through challenges that go beyond the gym floor.

## LOOKING AHEAD

So, what does the future hold for personal training in Bangladesh?

Izar is optimistic. "With increasing awareness, the demand for personal trainers will keep rising," he predicts.

Durdana believes that this growth will also inspire more people to become trainers. "It's exciting to see so many individuals stepping into this field," she says.

Biswas, meanwhile, has his sights set on global opportunities.

"Bangladeshi trainers have the talent to compete internationally. Certifications are the key to unlocking that potential," he explains. Developing local certification programmes aligned with international standards could turn Bangladesh into a regional hub for

fitness training.

The rise of online fitness platforms has brought new challenges for personal trainers. "Online programmes are everywhere, but they lack the personal touch," says Durdana. To stay relevant, she offers hybrid training that combines in person and virtual sessions.

"This way, clients get flexibility without losing that human connection," she explains.

Both Anan Izar and Mitun Biswas see technology as an opportunity rather than a threat. "Digital tools can complement what trainers do," says Biswas. "They can help us reach more people without losing the personalised approach that makes our work effective."

## ADVICE FOR NEW TRAINERS

Everyone agrees that the best advice for anybody thinking about a career in fitness training is to never stop learning.

According to Nuran

Durdana, "You need a solid understanding of anatomy, nutrition, and exercise science."

Biswas adds that this sector is constantly changing. "Remain informed on the newest trends and technologies," he says.

As the concluding remark, Izar emphasises how crucial it is to establish trusting bonds with clients.

"It goes beyond the technical aspects. You have to establish a personal connection with people," he explains.

In Bangladesh, the emergence of personal fitness coaches signifies a profound cultural change. The sector is expected to continue expanding as individuals begin to place a higher value on their health than they did previously.

Leading trainers like Nuran Durdana, Anan Izar, and Mitun Biswas are demonstrating that fitness is a way of life rather than only a fad. Personal training in Bangladesh is paving the way for a healthier, more active future for all by embracing innovation and tackling issues like accessibility and affordability.

By K Tanzeel Zaman

Photo: Courtesy

In frame: Nuran Durdana; Anan Izar; Mitun Biswas



is at the forefront of this fitness change.

She says, "Back in 2018, most people didn't understand why they needed a trainer. Now, things have changed. People want someone to hold them accountable and help them reach their goals properly."

Anan Izar, another reputed trainer, agrees. "The focus has shifted. It's not just about showing up at the gym anymore. People want personalised plans that suit their needs and lifestyles."

It's also not just Dhaka that's seeing this change. According to Mitun Biswas, a trainer with over two decades of experience, other cities like Chattogram and Sylhet are catching up fast.

"People are joining running groups, cycling communities, and gyms. They're more active than ever," Biswas says.

The growing interest in personal training has also been fuelled by the increasingly sedentary lifestyles of people. Long work hours and relentless commutes have left many searching for structured fitness solutions to break out





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# INBOUND TOURISM

## The economic boost Bangladesh keeps ignoring

Frequently referred to as the "land of rivers", Bangladesh is interwoven by over 700 rivers and produces breathtaking views, as well as an ecology that sustains a thriving biodiversity. If you leave the natural beauty aside though, then there is the abundance of historical sites, a cultural legacy and all that translates to

country might have the opportunity to make its tourist industry a significant economic pillar.

### WHY IS INBOUND TOURISM SO IMPORTANT?

Inbound tourism acts as a critical catalyst for economic growth across the world. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) claims that the global tourism industry was able to accomplish a staggering USD 9.9 trillion, which is equivalent to 9.1 per cent of the global GDP, in the year of 2023. This portrays how the travelling and the tourism industry can stimulate local economies, create new jobs, and improve the standard of living.

Bangladesh has a lot of opportunities, but for some reason, this is not fully utilised. In 2022, more than 529,000 foreign travellers entered Bangladesh, which is a sign of gradual improvement following the COVID-19 pandemic. This number, however, pales in comparison to countries like India that hosted over 17 million international tourists in 2019.

Tourism makes up around 3.4 per cent of Bangladesh's GDP, according to Bangladesh Tourism Corporation, which is far less than the average 10 per cent that the rest of the world enjoys, and heavily suggests

untapped development opportunity. Numerous aspects of the economy are directly impacted by inbound tourism. Jobs in a variety of industries, like retail, food services, transportation, and hospitality, are facilitated by tourism.

Bangladesh may experience substantial employment with a growing tourist industry, especially in its rural or underdeveloped areas. Inbound tourists also contribute significant foreign currency to the economy, bolstering national reserves and promoting trade. Beyond this, tourism also enhances Bangladesh's reputation outside by showcasing the country's beauty, history, and legacy, and promoting international ties.

### SUCCESS STORIES ACROSS THE BORDER

You do not have to look far to understand the contribution that inbound tourism makes to a nation.

Thailand, for example, which was previously ranked as a low-income country, became a star in the tourism industry by marketing its world-class beaches, heritage, and local experiences. It earned around 11 per cent of its GDP from tourism in 2019, which welcomed 39.8 million tourists. Thailand's success is in its ability to provide a range of experiences at various price points, while promoting itself as a safe and unique travel destination.

"Bangladesh has similar potential," states Shehrina Wahid, Director Public Relations at Amari Dhaka Hotel, a renowned five-star hotel in the capital.

"We have been ineffective at promoting our beautiful country. If we could do proper promotions, especially with spots like Cox's Bazar, Saint Martin's Island, the Sundarbans, and all other lesser known but equally beautiful sites, we have the potential to become global attractions. We think these places are quite well-known, but that's mostly locally, and many foreigners remain unaware of them, and this needs to change," she adds.

### NECESSARY BUILDING BLOCKS

Any tourism sector relies heavily on dependable and effective infrastructure. For Bangladesh, this means spending money on utilities, lodging, and transportation. Our road and rail connections to popular tourist destinations are also lacking. Although, recent projects like the railway line that connects Dhaka and Cox's Bazar, and the Padma Bridge, are encouraging initiatives. Travel for foreign tourists can be made easier by growing these networks and enhancing airport amenities, especially at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

While major centres such as Dhaka and Chattogram have luxury hotels, tourist

destinations that are further out of these developed zones frequently lack quality lodging. It's possible to accommodate a range of travellers' tastes by promoting investments in eco resorts, budget accommodations, and even homestays.

"Five star hotels like Amari Dhaka can organise any kind of tour for our foreign guests to visit any tourist destination within Dhaka, so that they can actually enjoy their stay," says Shehrina Wahid. "These guests come here for work on month-long, sometimes yearly contracts, and they soon exhaust their destination options. They frequently express interest in venturing outside the capital. Improving infrastructure, and more importantly, safety at out-of-city destinations would allow us to perhaps, partner with agencies and offer more comprehensive tourism experiences."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23



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## Inbound tourism: The economic boost Bangladesh keeps ignoring



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

Cox's Bazar, the darling of tourist destinations in Bangladesh, would greatly benefit from the inclusion of more entertainment alternatives after the sun sets, and the beach's appeal subsides.

Raxy Dominic Gomes, Senior Manager, Sales & Marketing at Mermaid Eco Tourism Ltd, shares his opinions on the matter.

"Cox's Bazar has a strong global appeal, being the longest unbroken beach in the world, and we see that in the number of tourists that visit here. Plus, the Marine Drive road joins the ranks amongst some of the most beautiful roads in the world, because on one side, you have hills, and on the other, the sea. However, once night falls, activities that tourists can take part in drop sharply. At Mermaid Beach Resort, we try to alleviate this with movie nights, games, and more importantly, our Full Moon Parties, where guests can enjoy themselves by the seaside with music."

"We also feel that if there was a mall or movie theatre, foreign guests wouldn't be so bored once night falls here, because these tourists are used to such facilities in other countries they visit. It only seems to be lacking here."

### GETTING THE WORD OUT ABOUT BANGLADESH

In this day and age, having a great online presence is essential for drawing foreign tourists. To establish itself as a distinctive vacation destination, Bangladesh needs a well-coordinated marketing plan. Our traditional cuisine, natural beauty, and cultural festivals can be promoted on social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. Working together with famous travel-focused influencers to produce interesting content can blow up online and become trending all over the world.

"For further promotion to a worldwide audience, we must take a more proactive presence at international travel fairs like ITB Berlin and WTM London, both of which, we attended last year to great fanfare," says Wahid.

The Sundarbans Mangrove Forest, the Ruins of the Buddhist Vihara, and the historic mosque city of Bagerhat are UNESCO World Heritage Sites, a fact oblivious to many Bangladeshis and the global audience. We can also pull in eco conscious tourists if we focus on much-needed sustainable tourism practices, while history buffs may be drawn to heritage tourism. Creating guided tours that visit, say, Dhaka's Old Town, or perhaps, Paharpur's historic ruins, and even Sylhet's tea fields and waterfalls, could result in unforgettable experiences.

### STEPS FOR THE GOVERNMENT

The government can do a lot to improve the influx of inbound foreign travellers to Bangladesh.



an in depth involvement by the government, first by educating the masses, and secondly, by maintaining an active cleaning programme.

"It's crucial to maintain these spots," Shehriina Wahid notes. "I improved clean-up processes and environmental

policies are essential to preserving our country's beauty for future visitors."

Additionally, if the government created an interactive, bilingual tourism website with detailed itineraries, virtual tours, and safety recommendations, it would make it simpler for foreign visitors to plan their vacations.

The tourist industry of Bangladesh is both an unrealised opportunity and a challenge. We can develop our tourism into a substantial economic contributor by making infrastructural investments, rebranding our country in the eyes of potential foreign tourists, and marketing our ecological and cultural riches.

Besides the economic benefit, inbound tourism shall take Bangladesh to the world, showcasing all its beauty, hospitality, and rich cultural heritage. The country has the potential to become the leader in tourism in South Asia with governmental, corporate, and local sector cooperation. Now is the time to do it because everyone who visits this nation, takes back home more than memories – they carry a piece of a country ready to welcome the world.

### By Intisab Shahriyar

Photo: Shahrear Kabir Heemel  
Location: Mermaid Beach Resort



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# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

## A trend worth following



With its sprawling mangrove forest, unbroken beaches, and lush green rolling hills, our country is a gem in the global arena. With this much diversity, we, as a nation, have the potential to be a major tourist destination. However, the rapid growth of tourism is putting pressure on the very environment and hospitable culture that attract visitors to this destination. The problem is obvious: how can tourism increase without endangering

communities and fragile ecosystems? Sustainable tourism, a radical new approach that balances expansion with the preservation of the environment and culture is the viable solution.

#### IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM FOR BANGLADESH

Environmental dangers like pollution, deforestation, and climate change are no longer 'conspiracy' theories or left-thinking ideologies. It is very real, and the consequences are already being felt all across the globe and Bangladesh is no exception: with local communities suffering from biodiversity loss, tourism speeding up pollution in delicate ecosystems, and rising sea levels

endangering coastal areas.

In a nation like ours, where ecosystems are both rich and vulnerable, sustainable tourism is not only a preference but also essential for the future.

Traditional tourism industry models focus on instantaneous profits, leaving aside the long-term consequences. Uncontrolled human intervention is already beginning to change the natural environment of its prime representative – the Royal Bengal Tiger – in places like the Sundarbans. Similarly, the uncontrolled expansion of tourism in Cox's Bazar is causing the once pristine beaches to deteriorate. Sustainable tourism can assist in

resolving these issues by promoting eco-friendly practices, protecting the biodiversity of the area, and involving local communities in tourism development.

#### INSPIRING JOURNEYS

Bangladesh can learn a thing or two from various nations that have embraced the sustainable tourism concept into their development agenda and now reap the reward of thriving tourism.

The travel policy of Bhutan, 'high value, low volume,' shows how a country can balance environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and economic growth at the same time. Iceland, another country known for

surreal scenery, has passed legislation that is also environmentally conscious to protect the environment by utilising renewable sources of energy and promoting eco-friendly travel.

Costa Rica, which is quickly becoming the hub of ecotourism, with its eco-lodges nicely tucked away in the lush, verdant rainforests, is raising revenue for local communities while protecting the environment.

We can learn from these achievements and develop similar sustainable tourism models that benefit the country's economy while preserving our environment and culture.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

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## Sustainable tourism: A trend worth following

**Little things like selecting eco-friendly lodging, not littering, and honouring local customs can have a big impact on protecting the places they visit.**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

### APPARENT OBSTACLES

Bangladesh faces several challenges when it comes to implementing sustainable tourism practices. The ignorance of both visitors and local companies about eco-friendly methods and their advantages is a major problem. Due to a lack of knowledge about the long-term effects, many entrepreneurs continue to engage in environmentally harmful actions.

Furthermore, contrary to popular belief, ecotourism is quite expensive, which may discourage companies from walking down this path. To help lower these expenses, more government initiatives that promote eco-friendly business models are required, such as tax benefits for eco-friendly companies or funding for renewable/sustainable projects.

Finally, infrastructure is desperately needed to enable ecotourism. Many of the tourist attractions in the country lack the infrastructure required to guarantee sustainability, from waste management systems to renewable energy sources.

Sustainable tourism practices will continue to be difficult to implement without these developments.

### CHALLENGING TASK BUT NOT IMPOSSIBLE

One outstanding example of sustainable tourism in action is the efforts of Mermaid Eco Tourism Ltd, more specifically, their Beach and Eco Resorts. Their dedication to sustainability extends well beyond token efforts. You could say it is firmly rooted in their operational model. We spoke to Raxy Dominic Gomes, Senior Manager of Sales & Marketing for Mermaid Eco Tourism Ltd to get an insight into how they operate.

A crucial component of a resort's



sustainability plan is how well it can integrate into the surrounding environment. Elaborating on this, Gomes stated — "Before the resort was created, we planted an enormous number of trees in the area. Once the trees grew, the resorts were created around this lush greenery. Because of this, both our resorts are in the midst of pleasant, well-cared-for greenery.

Aside from helping to bring down the temperatures in the area, and providing plenty of fresh air, a lot of exotic birds also call Mermaid home.

"Finally, we believe that true sustainable tourism should incorporate all of the surrounding area, and the people living in it. Nearly all our staff are members of the local community. This is important for multiple reasons. For one thing, being locals, they are familiar with the environment here and know how to take care of it better. It also reduces the carbon footprint as there is no long commute. And of course, most importantly, it boosts the local economy. If other hotels and resorts adopt a similar approach, this will boost the employment rate further."

The heart of every sustainable tourism business is recycling and upcycling. And Mermaid is no different.

"We commission well-known artists to make sculptures/artworks with our discarded furniture. We also integrate our broken glasses onto our pavement. We use broken mic shells as décor and lighting fixtures. We even used broken

electronic components of a computer to make a chair! In short, nothing at Mermaid ever goes to waste. Every component finds new life as something else," said Gomes.

### CAN THE GOVERNMENT DO SOMETHING?

Government intervention is necessary if we want sustainable tourism to flourish in Bangladesh. The cost-to-entry barrier for businesses would be greatly reduced by policies that offer financial incentives to such businesses, like tax rebates or grants for eco-friendly tourism endeavours. The government can also promote a flourishing sustainable tourist sector by providing financial assistance to companies that have sustainability as high priority.

Additionally, the government can proactively educate the public. The success of sustainable tourism initiatives would be greatly enhanced through awareness campaigns that highlight the advantages of sustainable travel, as well as the implementation of laws that restrict environmental destruction.

### WHY TOURISTS PLAY A KEY ROLE

Not everything is up to the businesses. Tourists also have an important duty to make sure that tourism helps the local community and the environment. Little things like selecting eco-friendly lodging, not littering, and honouring local customs can have a big impact on protecting the places they visit.

"You see it often in popular tourist

destinations in our country. Walk the Cox's Bazar Laboni Point beach after 4 PM and you will see the sheer amount of litter people casually throw. This sounds 'natural' but I even found discarded bottles and crisp packets in waterfalls deep in some hiking trails! If we don't self-regulate, no amount of initiative will ever be good enough," commented Ahnaf Rahman, an enthusiastic solo traveller.

Mermaid Tourism Ltd tackled the matter with a lead-by-example approach.

"We tackle the littering problem by setting an example. Our resort is always kept clean, not just by our cleaning crew, but by every single employee in the resort, higher-ups being no exception. If we come across some random trash, we usually do not wait. Whoever spots it, properly disposes of it. This lets the guests know that keeping a place clean has nothing to do with social ranking. And in general, when guests see how clean the resort is, they usually self-regulate themselves to not litter," remarked Gomes.

### BENEFITS OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

You might wonder, given all the hassle, enormous cost, and manpower involved in sustainable tourism, how much upside there is for companies and the nation in general. Well, the benefits are numerous.

First and foremost, it is a fact that

sustainable tourism protects the environment. That's what would keep ecosystems and resources intact for future generations. Secondly, it is an asset for the country, since sustainable tourism channels a whole lot of investment, promotes local business ventures, and even provides employment opportunities. Besides, equalisation, in terms of benefit sharing and involvement of the local people in tourism, has the potential to reduce inequality and uplift standards of living. Lastly, Bangladesh can market its strong dedication towards environmental awareness so that the whole world can see it as a vacation spot interesting to travellers.

Although it might take quite some time to achieve sustainable tourism, at the end of the day, it would be worth the effort. Emulating the world's best practices and utilising local assets will surely lead us toward a future of tourism that nourishes cultural preservation and environmental concerns.

The question for Bangladesh is not if sustainable tourism is feasible, but rather if we are prepared to adopt it. Although the path ahead may be difficult, the potential benefits — a flourishing, environmentally friendly tourist sector — make the effort worthwhile.

By Intisab Shahriar  
Photo: Shahrear Kabir Heemel  
Location: Mermaid Beach Resort

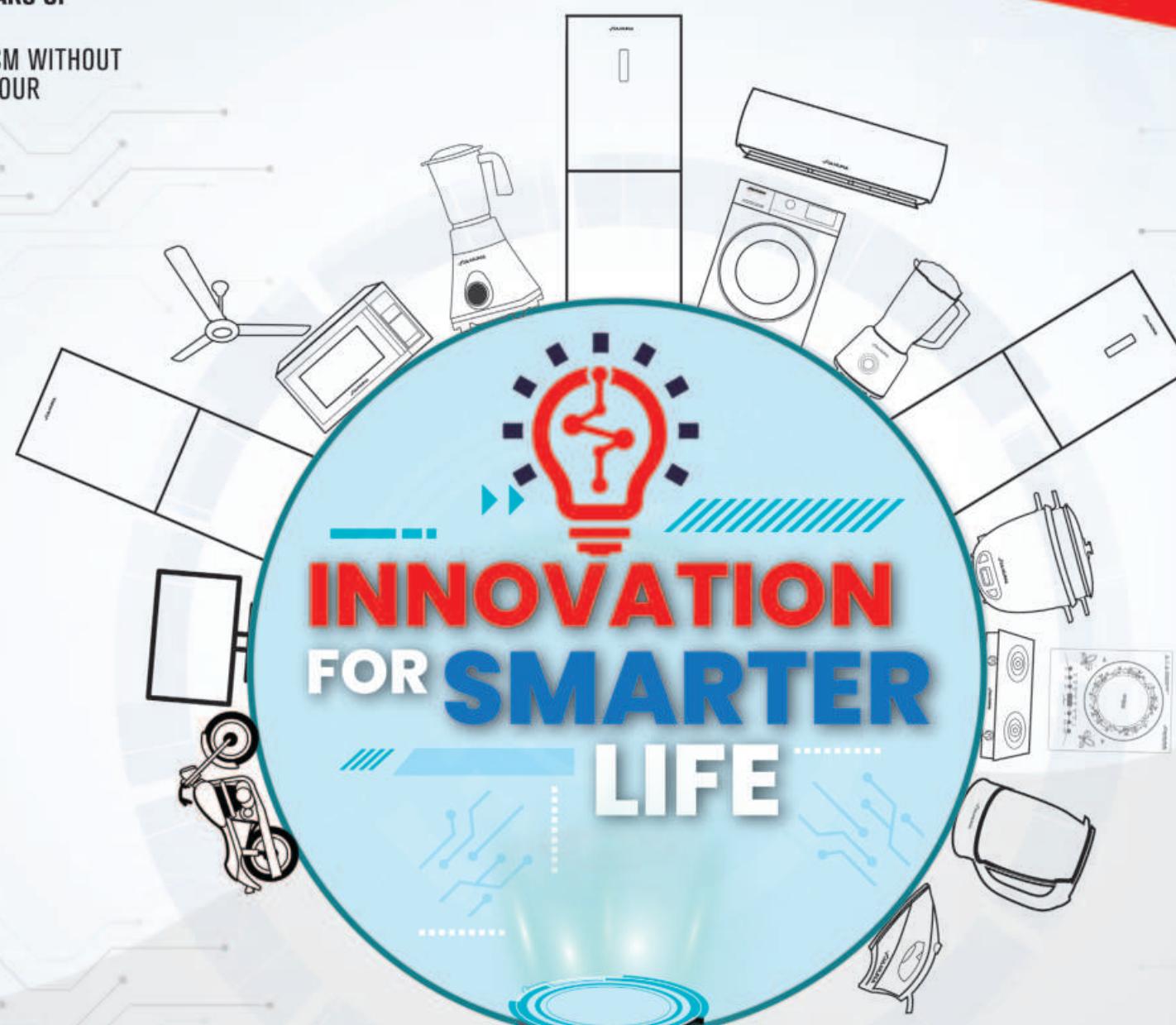
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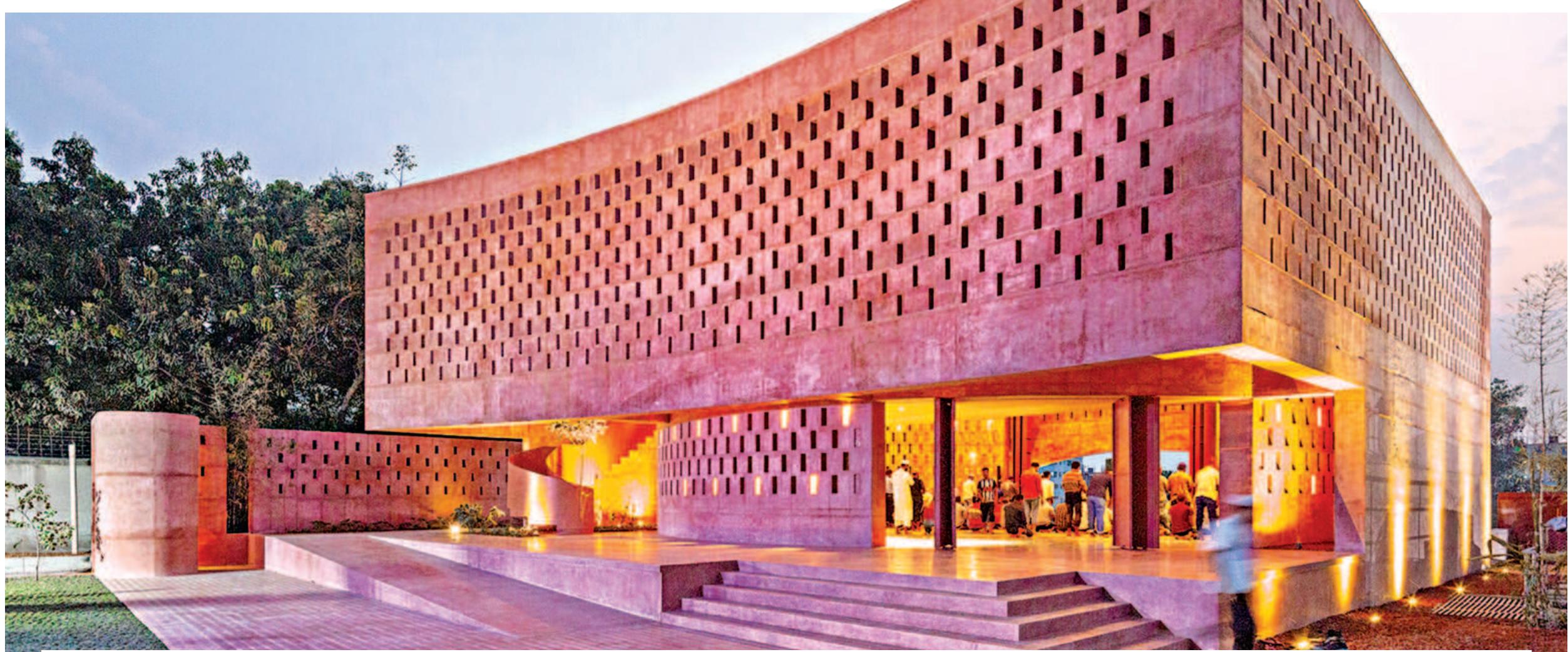
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## Architecture that inspires

The contemporary architectural scene in Bangladesh is going through an exciting time. In an era when design styles seem to travel faster than light, and certain trends set the standards — Bangladeshi buildings are blending global styles with the local features, rooted in our vibrant culture and climate.

Bangladesh's palette of architectural works is surely diverse, and many of them are being celebrated

worldwide. Numerous works have also received international recognition. What is more admirable is the growing interest of young architects in community-led architecture — rethinking shelters in marginalised areas of the country.

But how is modern architecture evolving towards innovative solutions to enhance our lifestyles? Do we need traditional Bengali wisdom in this modern era?

To get an in-depth understanding, we spoke to some notable architects of our time, and understand their insights into the inspiring landmarks they designed!

### OLD TOWN, NEW MOSQUE

"At the beginning of my design process, I ask myself, where am I standing?" shares Prof Rafiq Azam, principal architect of SHATOTTO Architecture for Green Living. The pioneering architect shares that

a meaningful building is largely shaped by its place and people.

One of his remarkable works; Mayor Mohammad Hanif Jame Mosque has won the Eurasian Prize 2020 in the architecture category. In this project, he takes a bold step towards redefining the classical image of a mosque by embracing contemporary features.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 27

Zebun Nessa Mosque, Ashulia  
Photo: Asif Salman





Simpletree Lighthouse, Banani. Photo: H M Fozla Rabby Apurbo



Mayor Mohammad Hanif Jame Mosque, Azimpur  
Photo: SHATOTTO Architecture for Green Living



Cox's Bazar Railway Station. Photo: Claudio Manzoni

## Architecture that inspires

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26

Upon entering the complex, devotees are welcomed with a scenic roofless terrace, with a view towards the Azimpur Graveyard. People come here, sit down, sometimes chat with their neighbours, or take some rest during the non-praying hours. On Friday afternoons, the place fills with people gathering for the Jummah prayer.

"The terrace is inspired by the Mughal concept of 'Shaan,' describes Azam. "In this bustling neighbourhood, the shaan serves as a social hub and a much-needed respite," he elaborates.

Dhaka, also famous as 'The City of Mosques' – brims with places of worship. Yet, rarely do we see one with no domes, archways, or 'minarets,' especially in an old town where Mughal mosques stand proud.

Azam says that he had involved the community and the clientele in the design conversation, and soon, people were eager to have a new mosque in their area.

In answering what drove him to discard these details, the veteran architect responded rather thoughtfully, "I think the absence of symbols can actually bring us closer to God."

Breaking away from decorative traits, Azam wished to evoke spirituality with natural and subtle attributes. For example, the male prayer hall omits a traditional praying spot (mihrab) of the religious leader (Imam). Instead, the Imam's prayer space is highlighted by light from the ceiling and glass accents on the floor, creating a peaceful ambience.

The female prayer space has a dramatic opening on the roof, letting light flow inside. Imagine saying a prayer in such a divine setting, where sunshine flickers through pierced walls, as the graveyard lying a few steps away reminds you of the ultimate fate.

The soaring tower at the front of the mosque and a chic glass bridge with engraved Qur'anic verses define the aesthetics of a present-day praying space. Azam shares with content how the local people take care of the landmark, fostering a sense of community in the neighbourhood.

### TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE SKYLINE

Beyond religious spaces, the megalith of Dhaka is seeing rapid growth in commercial structures. In the bustling boulevards of the capital, we can see a range of sleek towers, reflecting this swift transformation.

Take Shanta Forum as an example. The 25-storey twin tower at Tejgaon exhibits an expansive 'urban plaza,' while heat-resistant towers overlook the Hatirjheel Lake. Like Forum, many cutting-edge high-rises are shaking up the city skyline, with exciting skyscrapers underway!

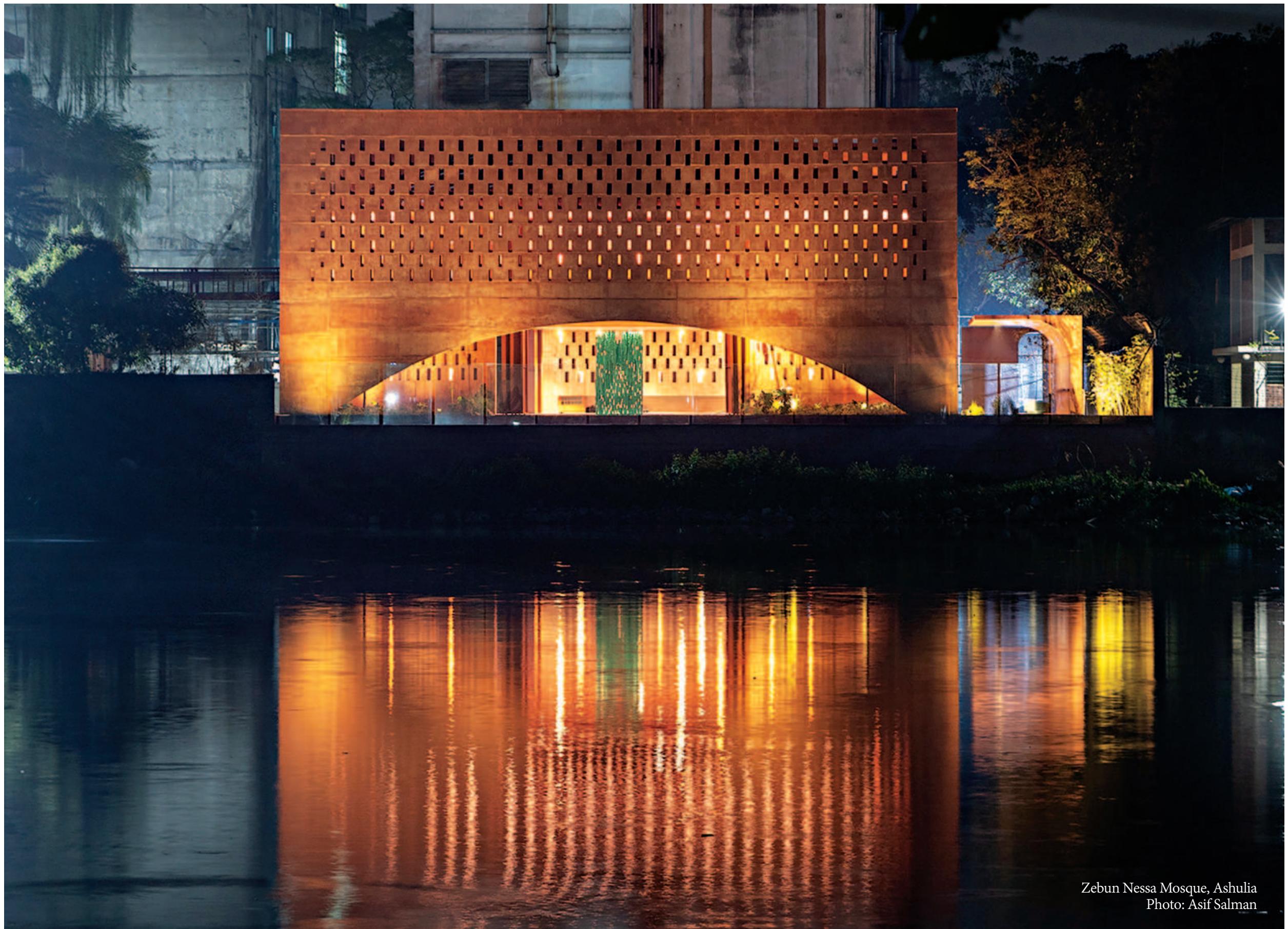
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Zebun Nessa Mosque, Ashulia  
Photo: Asif Salman

## Architecture that inspires

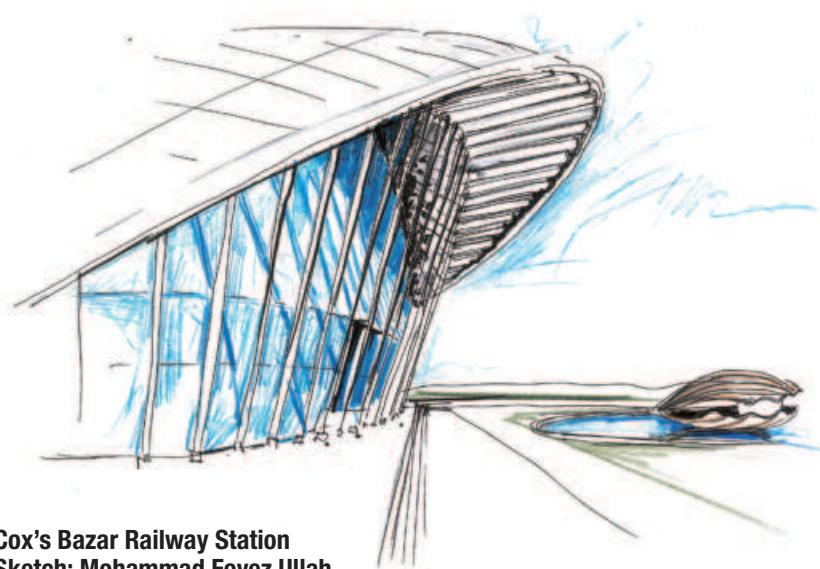
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"The city is inevitably evolving towards high-rise buildings," observes Mohammad Foyez Ullah, the principal architect of Volumezero Limited with over 30 years of experience in the field. "And managing the density is an opportunity for architects to innovate," remarks the architect.

His portfolio has myriad milestone projects, like International Convention City Bashundhara (ICCB), Grameenphone Corporate Headquarters (GP House, designed in partnership with Mustapha Khalid Palash), Shahjalal Islami Bank CHQ, and many more.

In his work, he explores how buildings can interact with the city while enhancing the quality of a fast-paced lifestyle. But do these ambitious buildings increase the construction cost? Foyez Ullah emphasises that smart engineering and technology can in fact help cut down the budget. Furthermore, he adds that strategic planning can go a long way in dealing with our harsh tropical climate.

We can spot a notable example



Cox's Bazar Railway Station  
Sketch: Mohammad Foyez Ullah

and textured concrete of the 15-story development sets a serene tone amidst the corporate backdrop.

The luminous interiors of the Lighthouse are a result of a calculated floor plan. "We try to arrive at an efficient floor plate width to ensure light reaches into the interior," clarifies Foyez Ullah. "The interplay of glass and concrete layers creates a deep shade from the sun while elevating the aesthetics," he remarks.

The rhythmic terraces are cosy with flowers and plants, offering an exquisite view of the cityscape. He stresses how architecture can play a role in creating a healthy, comfortable and refreshing work environment in our race with time.

The iconic building embraces a sustainable construction approach, earning LEED Gold certification from The U.S. Green Building Council. In recent times, buildings like Simpletree Anarkali, CEGIS Bhaban, and GP House, along with many others, incorporate green materials, rainwater harvesting and water recycling systems – inspiring a bold new step towards sustainable architecture.

### MODERN SPACES WITH A TRADITIONAL TWIST

As modern architecture embraces innovation, the Zebun Nessa Mosque, designed by Studio Morphogenesis Limited, sets a stunning example of how modernity and tradition can co-exist and complement each other.

"On the one hand, the main hall of the mosque serves as a well-being space, echoing modern values," describes lead architect Saika Iqbal Meghna, co-founder of Studio Morphogenesis Limited. "The perforated walls, garden courts, and a thin shell dome on the other, bring back age-old aesthetics of Bengal in keeping the room naturally cool," continues Meghna, also an Assistant Professor of the Department of Architecture at BRAC University.

The mosque has recently been awarded a place on the architecture shortlist of the top five civic projects from around the world for the Dezeen Awards 2024.

The prayer space has multiple uses – it holds discussions and prayer sessions where children from the nearby madrassa attend.

Meghna recalls, as an architecture student, she was once denied entry during a mosque survey. "The women's gallery in Zebun Nessa Mosque ensures the democracy of a space, where everyone can enter without hesitation," she shares with pleasure.

One of the noteworthy features of the mosque is its unique connection with nature that establishes the very idea of a "breathing pavilion" built over an elevated mound adjacent to low land and waterbodies, an indigenous architecture form of the monsoon delta.

The mosque marks its profound presence, deeply integrating the existing waterbody, a reminiscence of Ashulia's original landscape. According to Meghna, the client wanted to integrate the serenity of the nearby waterbody into the lifeless industrial zone.

"As a response, we partly chiselled away the westward boundary wall – revealing the view. Unlike solid qibla walls in conventional mosques, the qibla of this mosque is defined by a wide arched opening, allowing the prayer space to flow seamlessly towards a light-filled infinity," she adds.

Saika Iqbal Meghna stresses how modern architecture allows architects to settle for a simpler and more efficient approach. The ethos is evident in many architectural benchmarks, including the Bait Ur Rouf Jame Mosque by Marina Tabassum, which received the prestigious Aga Khan Award for its masterful geometry with the essence of Sultanate features.

A HOMEGROWN MASTERPIECE  
Back in 2023, when the Cox's Bazar

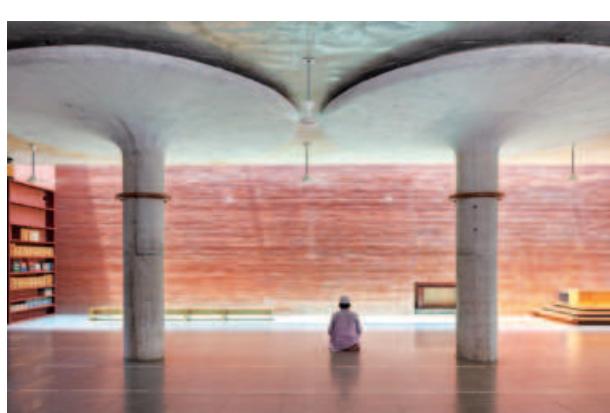
Railway Station opened to the public, many were amazed at the spectacular architectural grandeur. According to Foyez Ullah, the principal architect of the project, it was a challenge to make the project possible with the resources available in our country.

"We wanted to explore our capabilities," he remarks, with an enthusiasm to push the boundaries. "Translating the clamshell shape into a practical design was surely a challenge, and we overcame it."

As one of the most iconic stations in the country, the unique roof represents the rich marine life of the sea, captivating locals and visitors alike. The station offers a grand welcome to tourists arriving to the beach city, where shops, experience zones, restaurants, and guest accommodations aim to transform it into a vibrant entertainment district.

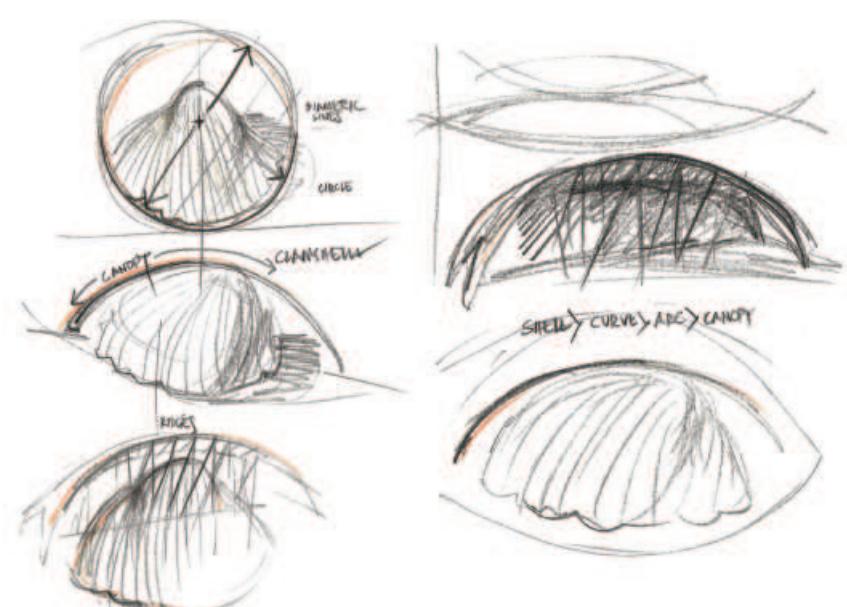
This marvel surely does make you wonder – how much our construction and design sector can contribute with the right kind of support and system! As our architectural field evolves and inspires, embracing innovation, and tradition – Bangladesh also looks forward, towards building a robust architectural identity on the global platform.

By Tasminah Rahman  
Photo: Courtesy



Mayor Mohammad Hanif Jame Mosque, Azimpur  
Photo: SHATOTTO Architecture for Green Living

of Foyez Ullah's vision for the city in Banani's Simpletree Lighthouse. Despite the compact plot of only around 14 katha, Lighthouse smoothly harmonises with the thriving streetscape. The muted colour palette



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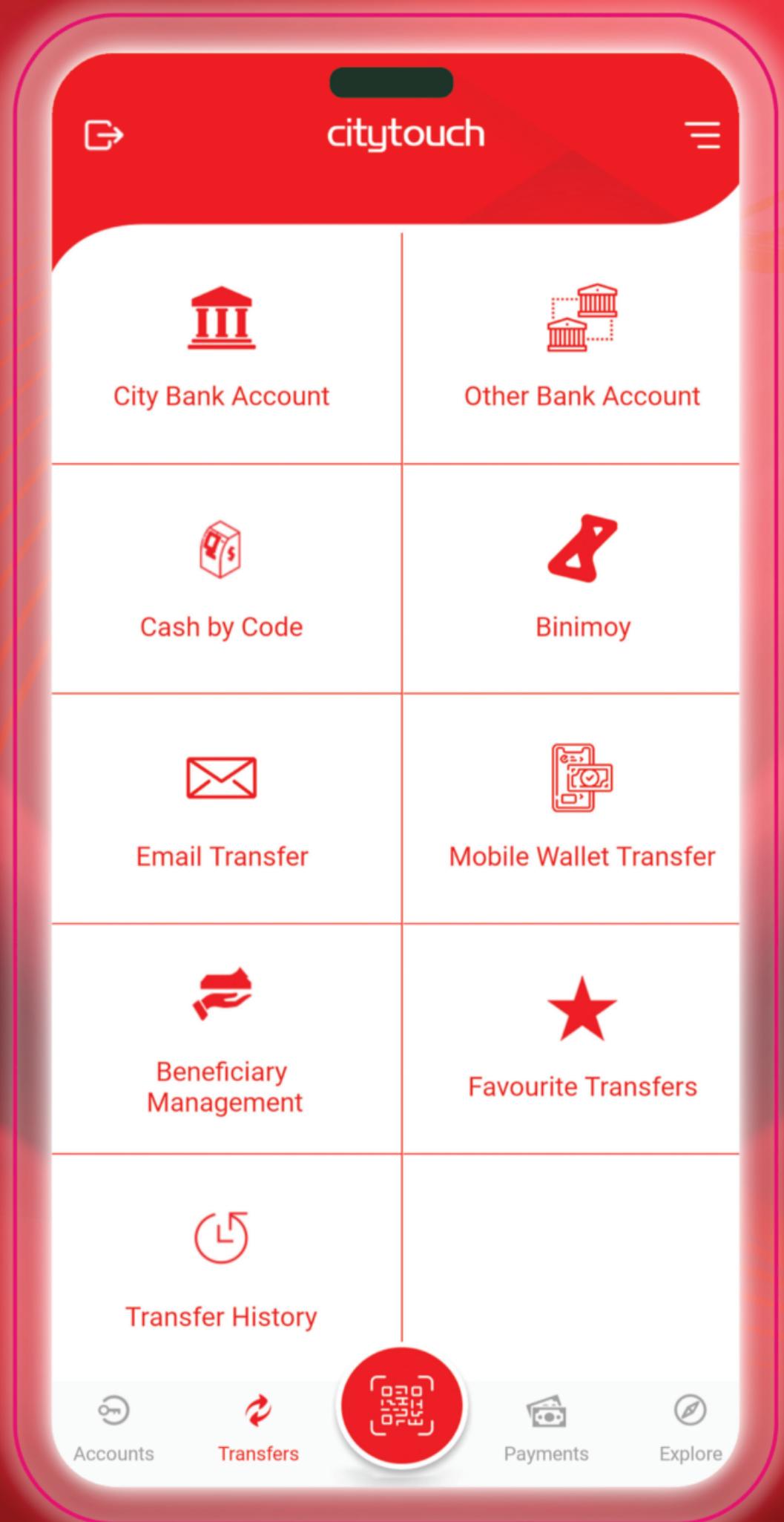


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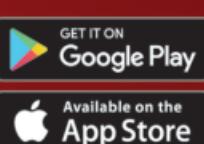
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## Eco-friendly interior design: WHAT'S TRENDING?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30

### RENEWAL OF RATTAN AND NATURAL MATERIALS

"If you go back to the early '80s or '90s, you would find houses having at least one rattan furniture along with their wooden ones. But now, rattans are used not only in furniture, but as screens and panels. However, most are artificial ones," informs Bristy.

While minimalist aesthetics are quite prominent in contemporary interior design, many homeowners are nowadays choosing natural materials such as cane, rattan, terracotta, and wood. Once a common feature in Bangladeshi households, cane and rattan furniture is making a stylish and strong return as screens, wall panels, partitions, and even decorative elements.

Today, preferred due to its lightweight and sustainable nature, and unlike bulky furniture, rattan pieces are easy to move, eco-friendly, and provide a rustic feel to modern interiors. Examples of rattan being used in modern homes include chairs, coffee tables, bed frames, and storage units, which add a textured and organic touch.

### THE FUTURE IS HIGH-TECH AND ECO-FRIENDLY HOMES

Thanks to technological advancements and urbanisation, the preference of homeowners is shifting. According to Bristy, two major trends are influencing modern home décor: smart technology

integration and eco-friendly, sustainable design.

"Smart security systems are trending these days, as people tend to prefer smart locks and lighting systems in their homes and offices. Homeowners are becoming increasingly conscious about the environment and their health. Hence, they use indoor plants to decorate the interiors – especially the ones that remove toxins from the air, and are good air purifiers like snake plants, spider plants and so on," shares Bristy.

Digital and biometric locks can be seen replacing traditional keys, which usually offer better security and remote access, and many use Wi-Fi-connected security cameras that can be monitored via smartphones. Homeowners are buying energy-efficient smart ACs that can be controlled via smartphone apps to optimise cooling and power consumption – although it is still a relatively new concept in Bangladesh.

While minimalism and multifunctionality dominate in many contemporary homes, a considerable number of homeowners are seen embracing traditional elements. Nevertheless, one thing is clear: modern Bangladeshi homes are a perfect blend of global inspiration and local adaptation.

By Ayman Anika

Photo: Arifa Malik Bristy



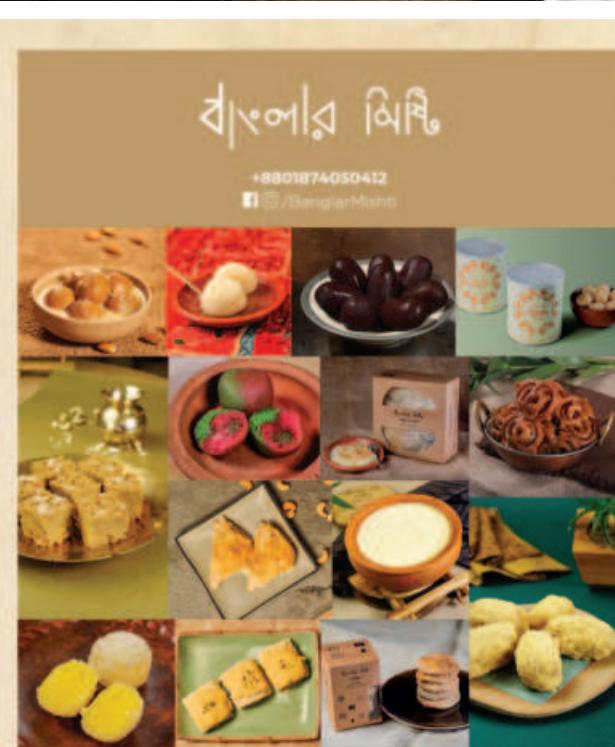
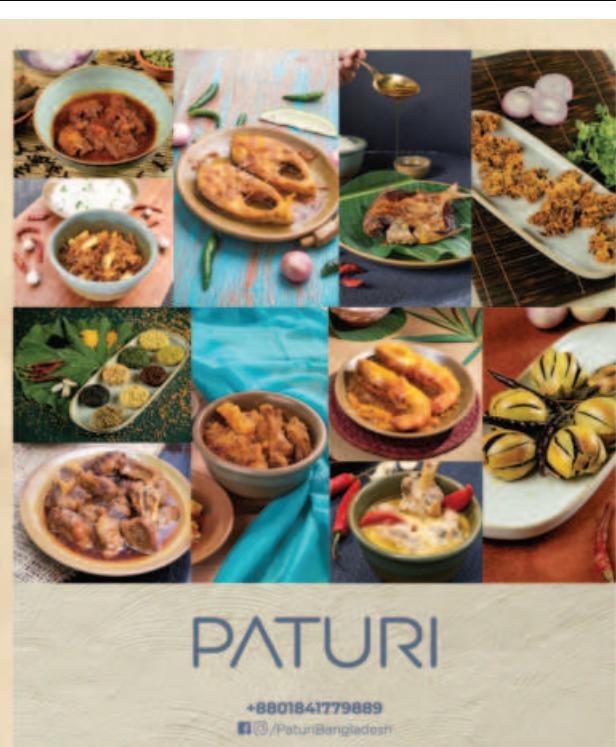
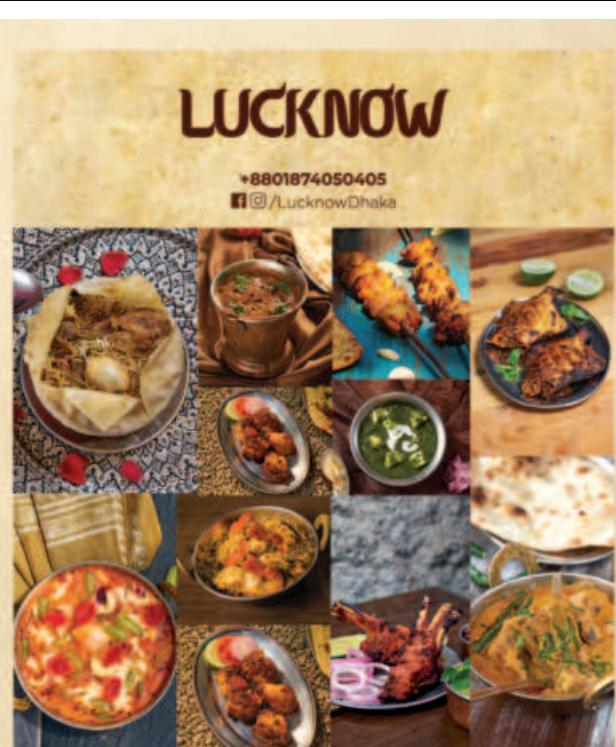
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# FROM COSY CHILEKOTHAS TO PLUSH PENTHOUSES

## The many charms of top-floor living

Cosy soirées, stargazing with telescopes, or unplugged musicals at private terraces are no longer scenes from a Hollywood film. Stylish living is redefining our fast-paced urban life, thanks to the state-of-the-art amenities. As the city runs faster than ever and moments fleet within the blink of an eye, people are embracing top-floor luxury to make the most of city life. Imagine living in a house where you can watch the metropolis in motion with a cup of coffee — with an uninterrupted view of the moon or the monsoon drizzles!

The idea of immersive top-floor living has long been a part of our culture. Remember Arnob's song "Chilekothay Gorbe Basha?" Living amidst the concrete cacophony, the singer's yearning for a haven on the roof speaks to many of us. As top-floor living evolves from humble attics to plush penthouses, let's take a broader look at the fascinating art of living on top-floor homes!



The compact suites, often used as storage rooms or guest quarters, are also an escape den for young adults navigating adulthood. The small windows open up a grand vista — representing their greater ambitions in life — often revealing a cinematic street view where real life unfolds in its truest colours.

"You see, these days, we don't get to see the sky from our rooms," comments Shuvro, a PhD student living abroad. "Also, the sound of the city might be irritating on the roads, but from the chilekotha — it creates a sense of rhythm."

Shuvro recollects how a small conference room with a few plastic chairs, and a portable fan welcomed his best friends every week after work before he left Dhaka for higher studies.

"The attic seemed like a small world of our own, where we could pour out all our stories," he shares fondly, "Countless nights witnessed our deepest conversations as we celebrated birthdays, new jobs, promotions and most importantly — Copa America Championships, all in that little room on the 10-storied building!" Shuvro continues with a hint of homesickness.

Despite the shift in the modern housing scene, chilekothas remain a souvenir of our past. In fact, many artists, musicians, and craftsmen are setting up their studios on rooftops — holding art shows and cosy jam sessions in an intimate setting.

### CHARMS OF LIVING IN TOP-FLOOR APARTMENTS

In recent years, Bangladesh has witnessed the advent of high-rise residential buildings, especially in Dhaka — where shimmering towers are reaching new heights with cutting-edge features.

"I can actually watch the sky from my bed," gushes Tasnim, who lives in a ninth-floor apartment. "And on full-

moon nights, my floor is bathed with silver light. We have lived in this flat for over a decade, yet I cannot help being spellbound by the flashes of lighting during *kaal-boishakhi* storms," she exclaims.

Apart from the magnetic views of passing seasons, advanced facilities such as multipurpose halls, and fitness centres are incorporated on the top floors so that the users can meet their everyday needs within the reach of gated condominiums.

"Be it Pahela Boishakh or 31st night, Eids or Pujas — people gather at the shared terraces to meet and greet," elaborates Tasnim. Despite being on the top floor, shading devices paired with vertical gardens keep the heat manageable in her home.

"Not very long ago, people would

Nasrin, a top floor homeowner in Dhaka, has recently moved into her dream house perched on the 14th floor. With ample shading and thoughtful decoration, she has turned her south-facing terrace into a lavish outdoor lounge. Colourful flowers, bonsai trees and benches make it a perfect place to host family luncheons, late-night barbecue sessions and a spot to rest after a hectic day.

### LUXURY LIVING IN LOFTY PENTHOUSES

We have watched it — the sophisticated gatherings in New York's deluxe penthouse apartments. High above the restless Manhattan where creative minds, professionals and entrepreneurs hobnob and enjoy an immersive getaway. These plush

penthouses are becoming the pinnacle of an extravagant lifestyle.

Zarin, a business owner residing in Dhaka, shares her plans for building an exclusive penthouse for her close circle — a boutique escape from the relentless hustle.

"I see the penthouse as a peaceful oasis, a free-flowing space to find solace from the chaos," she shares with enthusiasm. The successful businesswoman ponders how the pursuit of metropolitan dreams often leaves us drained and in need of enjoyment and aesthetic delight.

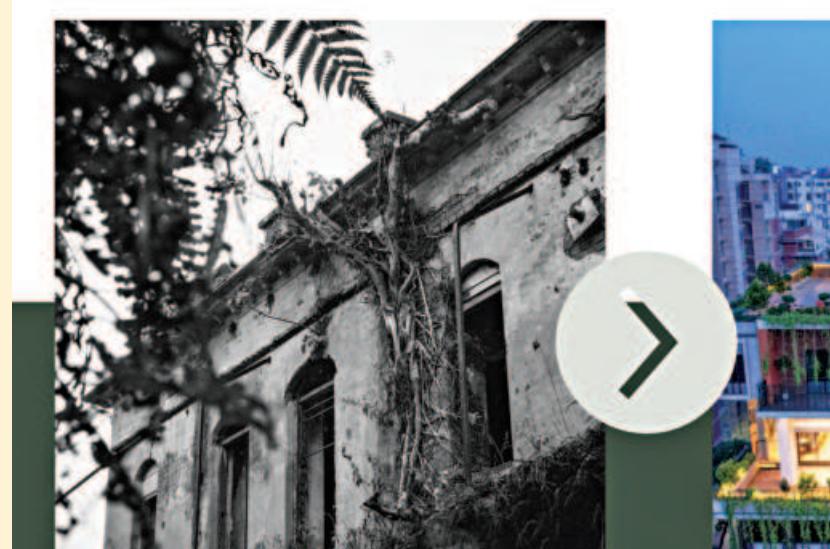
"The penthouse will not be for everyday living," Zarin muses. "It will be a place for slowing down and recreation. Floor-to-ceiling glass windows will draw the city inside the house — with a panoramic view of Hatirjheel Lake. Smart home systems will enable guests to enjoy outdoor cinema sessions and musicals, and a telescope will engage astronomy lovers in interstellar trips!"

Like Zarin, many well-off city dwellers are creating penthouses as living spaces, exclusively used for experiencing the finest of what the city has to offer.

With stark minimalist interiors, penthouses feature private elevators, expansive terraces, and of course bewitching views that will inspire you to shoot for the stars! Some even boast premium gyms and yoga studios, art galleries, and infinite pools — creating a self-contained world of ultimate luxury and amusement.

Imagine owning such a suave home with an address to cloud number nine — where the soaring heights turn urban chaos into a soothing chorus — as you spend a holiday on your sun-soaked sky deck, relaxing on comfy loungers!

Perched above the city's clamour, top-floor living offers more than just



avoid the top-floor apartments due to the overheating of the rooftop," notes architect, Abul Kalam Azad Kafy. "We use various strategies such as incorporating green lawns as a layer to block excessive heat gain. These gardens also serve as vibrant social hubs."

penthouses are no longer confined to silver screens or exotic lands — as the elites of our country embrace the highest quality of living. As Bangladesh's urban fabric stretches ever upward,

breathtaking views. These elevated sanctuaries continue to shape our urban experience, reminding us that sometimes, the best way to embrace the city is to rise above it!

By Tasnia Rahman  
Illustration: Biplob Chakraborty  
Canva: Ayman Anika



**THE NOSTALGIA OF A CHILEKOTHA**  
*Chaud* or the rooftop has a special place in our hearts. So much so that we used to set up small cabins on the rooftops as a sanctuary from day-to-day hustle. The chilekothas or attics were unfit for permanent stay due to the harsh sun, storms, and excessive rain, yet they offered a quiet respite with a ceaseless view of the surroundings.

"My *nana* built a chilekotha in the 1960s as his private retreat — a place where he could just relax," remembers Mushfiqur Fahim, a 28-year-old master's student.

Fahim reminisces about his childhood days at his grandparents' home in old Dhaka, where the attic was his go-to place to play with cousins. Old Dhaka's vintage townscape has been etched into his memory ever since.

"When I was a child, I made up a rule that no one should bother me while I was in the attic. Unlike any other room, it simply had the vibe of being the most secluded place in the world. In the afternoon, I could see children playing cricket, flying kites, people strolling and hanging out on the streets," Fahim recalls.



# Breaking the retirement myth EMBRACING A SECOND INNINGS



Iris Apfel was one of my favourite celebrities. Apfel was an American textile expert and interior designer by profession. I became a fan when she became popular as a fashion guru for her eccentric style and devil-may-care attitude for signing a modelling contract at age 97. Her outlook on ageing and work was inspiring — "I think retiring at any age is a fate worse than death. Just because a number comes up doesn't mean you have to stop" — she once stated in a magazine interview.

Her big, round, black-rimmed glasses, bright red lipstick, and bold choice of colours and accessories implied originality and she dared to carry it all so elegantly. Her tagline, "More is more and less is a bore," attracted millions of followers on Instagram and TikTok.

She never retired and died at the age of 102, enjoying her work fully until her last day. Her assertive perspective on what should be the ideal working years, got me thinking. This freedom of choice can be liberating but what she could do in her society is not achievable in ours. We tend to look at retired people with pity and as a burden.

Honestly, I hate to think that way.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34

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## Breaking the retirement myth: Embracing a second innings

**While challenges like cultural perceptions and technology adaptation are a reality, the city's evolving work dynamics and need for experienced guidance make it a promising shift.**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 33

### A BOLD OUTLOOK ON LIFE

This beautiful, all encompassing city should cash in on the experience and magic its seniors have to offer. An increasing number of businesses are hiring seniors, who have much to contribute to the workplace, in terms of experience, expertise, industry knowledge, or business relationships. This is quite common abroad.

Dhaka should have options to recruit its seniors, at least for soft jobs. It is becoming a strategic consideration for many companies and can also be a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) project.

"I believe my years of experience and institutional knowledge are just a waste of the fruitful years because, now that I have retired, I am not being able to share my knowledge with others. Retiring does not mean I forgot my skills," says Rosie Rashid, a former teacher with 40

a board of directors in a bank and a consultant in a consulting firm, I see immense potential in leveraging the expertise and wisdom of senior retired professionals.

While challenges like cultural perceptions and technology adaptation are a reality, the city's evolving work dynamics and need for experienced guidance make it a promising shift. With the right policies and awareness, Dhaka can fully embrace this trend. Nothing can replace experience and knowledge.

Therefore, the value of retired/semi-retired workforce should be tested within our country.



continuing work to stay active and supplement their income," Mahbub feels. She feels the need to address potential barriers like technology adaptation, generational differences in work style, and also in creating a supportive, inclusive work environment to add in the retired professionals. However, this

shock of not having a job was or still is, too taxing for many like him.

Our parents are always sick in our eyes because they are lonely and isolated from the active social and work life we lead. This loneliness translates into sadness that in turn grows as an ailment.

Tamima Tanjin, consultant clinical psychologist, Ph. D fellow in Neuropsychology, feels that old age is no more a disease than childhood – some would describe it rather as the penultimate stage of development.

considered when dealing with a senior person.

Most elderly people have experienced several losses in their lifetime – retiring from work, weakening of health and the sensory systems, death of family members like siblings and spouses. Perhaps, the worst is losing your home to your children and being a guest in your own house; this is the saddest and most difficult adjustment of all.

In assessing depression for the elderly, it is important to consider the impact of these losses the person has experienced, and how the person has attempted to cope with them.

They tend to withdraw from their social circle and lose life's purpose. As hard as it may sound, seeking a therapist for depressed elders is never an option for their family members to consider, mostly because they think it is part of the normal ageing process to be dispirited. Added to that is the society's negative stereotypes regarding seeking a therapist, such issues outweigh the importance of keeping the elders happy.

"Psychological treatment for depression seems to be offered less to older people than to younger adults. Anticipatory grief may do more harm than good. Each grief reaction is different; what you may experience, and feel is different from your friend of the same age," Tamima Tanjin explains.

Ageing is all about your perception of it. If you consider yourself helpless then you are, but if you want to chase your dreams, obsessions, and crazes that you always secretly held close to your heart and never had the time to realise, then now is the time to. A "little crazy" is what the doctors have prescribed for us!

**By Raffat Binte Rashid  
Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed; Prabir Das**



plus years of experience.

Rashid adds that the pay scale is not her only reason to seek re-employment.

"I just want to be occupied and feel worthy because lack of work or stimulation is dull. Old age should not be about ailments only or that feeling of being a burden to their family and society," she adds.

On the contrary, banker Nasreen Sattar, who retired from Standard Chartered Bank in 2009 continues to have been working since retirement. She currently serves as an independent director of Mutual Trust Bank PLC, chairman, Consumark LTD (Consultancy Firm), and an independent director at IPDC.

She said, "The trend of hiring retired and semi-retired professionals is slowly emerging in Dhaka. As someone embarking on my second innings as

### SENIOR CITIZENS IN THE WORKFORCE

Farhana Mahbub, a Human Resource Professional for the last 18 years, finds the trend of hiring retired professionals gaining momentum globally. She thinks that the phenomenon is worth considering here in Bangladesh.

Traditionally, retirement is seen as a time for rest, with less emphasis on returning to the workforce. Changing this mindset may take time but organisations are taking that step to include the experience of retired professionals in their workforce.

"These individuals bring years of experience, industry knowledge, and mentorship skills, which can greatly benefit companies, especially in leadership and specialised roles. Many retired individuals are keen on

option, of opting for a second inning in life regarding work, is yet to gain momentum in our society. That's a big shift in our workplace that can shape the future.

### A SHIFTING MINDSET

My father, who was a banker all his life, passed away only 14 days after his retirement. He could not mentally adjust to the fact that he would not have a monthly income or that he might be financially dependent on others. The

"Depression is closely linked to ill health in older people. Bodily symptoms are common in depressed elderly people and depression may present as a physical illness. Conversely, physical illness may present as, or precipitate depression.

"Sensory impairments are also relevant, loss of vision, loss of hearing, etc. Cognitive changes and decline in elderly people make it more difficult," the experienced psychologist explains, and says that all these issues must be



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# দেশজুড়ে ৩২টি শাখা নিয়ে ল্যাবএইড ডায়াগনস্টিকস

একই ছাদের নিচে সকল বিশেষজ্ঞ চিকিৎসক ও রোগ নির্ণয়ের সবধরনের পরীক্ষা-নিরীক্ষা

সেই ১৯৮৯ সাল থেকে  
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বিশেষজ্ঞ চিকিৎসক ও সর্বাধুনিক প্রযুক্তির সাথে  
যুগোপযোগী চিকিৎসা পদ্ধতি এবং যোগ্য জনবল নিয়েই  
ল্যাবএইড ডায়াগনস্টিকস।

এরই ধারাবাহিকতা বজায় রাখতে ল্যাবএইড  
ডায়াগনস্টিকস প্রতিনিয়ত সংযোজন করছে বিশ্বের  
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অব্যাহত ধারায় অর্জন করছে মূল্যবান দেশী ও  
আন্তর্জাতিক স্বীকৃতি।

আমরা এখন বিশ্বের যেকোনো উন্নত ডায়াগনস্টিকস  
সেন্টারের সমকক্ষ। দেশের চিকিৎসা পদ্ধতি এগিয়ে  
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প্রধান অনুপ্রেরণা।



## কেন আমরাই সেরা

■ **দেশের সেরা ল্যাব কেন্দ্রালটেক**  
আমাদের ল্যাবরেটরিতে রাখে দেশের  
খ্যাতনামা ল্যাব বিশেষজ্ঞরা, যারা সার্বক্ষণিক  
সব ধরনের রিপোর্ট পর্যবেক্ষণ করেন।

■ **৩৫ বছরের অভিজ্ঞতা**  
৩৫ বছরের অভিজ্ঞতা নিয়ে দেশ/বিদেশে  
সুনামের সাথে কাজ করছে।

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■ **BAB-এর স্বীকৃতি**  
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বোর্ড (বিএবি)-এর স্বীকৃতি লাভ করেছে।

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বিশ্লেষণ করে রিপোর্ট প্রস্তুত করা হয়।

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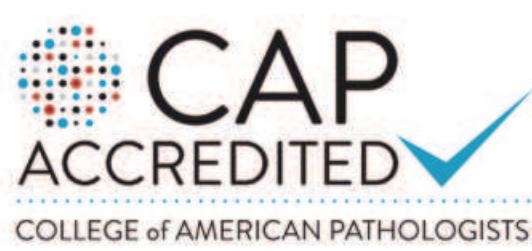
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২৪ ঘণ্টা থোলা। জরুরি সেবা ও রিপোর্ট দেয়া।

■ **অনলাইন রিপোর্ট ডেলিভারি**  
অনলাইনে প্র্যাথলজিকাল রিপোর্ট প্রদান।

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# LUXURY WATCHES

## The emerging investment opportunity



When asked what he intends to leave his children, a Bangladeshi father is likely to mention property or a flourishing business company. However, an heirloom that ticks with history, workmanship, and a strong return on investment, has been finding its way into the discourse for an increasing number of individuals — expensive watches.

Real estate and gold have long been seen by Bangladeshis as the safest methods to accumulate wealth. But an elegantly selected luxury watch? When the moment is appropriate, you may wear, show off, and profit from that asset. An excellent watch tells more than simply the time, and it retains its worth.

Although conventional wisdom is that luxury watches are exclusive to the wealthy, a new breed of well-travelled professionals and business owners is developing here who are not hesitant to dream big. The luxury watch sector is expected to reach billions of dollars globally, indicating that collectors are passionate.

However, figures only provide half the picture. The artistry, tradition, and interpersonal relationships that come with collecting watches are what truly make them magical, not just the money.

### TRULY TIMELESS

Captain Kashfiq H Chowdhury, an airline pilot, doesn't just buy watches — he falls in love with them.

"There's something fascinating about it," he says. "Before buying, I look at the rarity — how many were made, how the value might change over time. Most men do not wear jewellery, so a watch is the one thing that lets you make a statement."

As someone who spends most of his life soaring above the clouds, Kashfiq sees a fine timepiece the way he sees a plane — elegantly engineered, timeless, and built to last.

For Shafiq Hossain, a service holder, watches are also more than simple accessories — they are family heirlooms.



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# Your passport to freedom: BUYING THAT FIRST CAR

When do you feel like you have become an adult? This is a question that can warrant all sorts of answers. A practical one? Perhaps when you become a homeowner. A realistic one – when you buy your first car.

Buying a car in Bangladesh is a feat and a half, and for the uninitiated, it can be quite a daunting experience. The cost, especially, is the main detracting factor for most people, as cars here are worth around 300 per cent over their original sticker price. So, whatever decision you take, you must do so after significant consideration. The important question is – do you need to?

#### DO YOU NEED A CAR?

As strange as it may sound, as Dhaka developed, the need for owning a car dropped considerably. If you grew up in the '80s or '90s, transportation was few and far between, and the road network was not as well-maintained or elaborate. Plus, owning a car back then warranted a certain amount of social prestige.

Nowadays, the situation is almost the exact opposite. Dhakaites have access to much more elaborate transportation alternatives, the road network has drastically improved, halving the distance between the city's extremes, and public transportation has multiple alternatives.

can your regular commutes be done with something like the metro rail? If so, and you could do your other commutes on ride-sharing services, then you might consider skipping buying a car entirely and saving money for the future.

If public transport does not cover your route efficiently, or your commutes do not always follow a similar pattern, the next thing to consider would be what kind of car you need. This depends on your family/regular occupants, and it is an important consideration because your car type will dictate its price, tax, and running costs.

Currently, there are different types of cars you can look into as viable options. You could choose a hatchback style, a saloon style, or a similar sub-category of cars called estates or station wagons. If you have a big family, and only commute in Dhaka, and maybe the occasional trip to your ancestral home, there's the minivan/microbus.

And if you need a really big space, plus a comfy ride, and travel around Bangladesh and its sketchy roads, you could go for SUVs, or if that is too much for you, the in-between car style which is a crossover.

If it's just you and maybe your newly married partner, you could get away with a hatchback. If you are a family of four, a 4-door hatchback or saloon car should cover you.

cost incurred.

So, why choose new? For starters, it's new – meaning there are no hidden mechanical faults waiting to rear its ugly head the moment you drive out of the dealership. These cars are also the latest models on the market, and they have the most up-to-date safety features and all the bells and whistles when it comes to equipment trims.

The warranty is also another key feature. Generally, new cars are sold with bumper-to-bumper warranties lasting 3 to 10 years, including coverage for up to about 100,000 kilometres of service and three annual services. Buying new cars means a wise investment, particularly from honest dealers. However, they are so much more expensive

These battery-related servicing will add another Tk 2,500 to 5,000 to your usual servicing bills. The rest of the car follows the same servicing routine as a regular petrol-driven car.

Of course, changing customer preferences is also an observable aspect of the new automobile market. Saloon cars used to be incredibly popular a decade or so ago. Now, though, urban crossovers such as the Honda CR-V, Toyota's Corolla Cross, Yaris Cross, Harrier, and Mitsubishi Outlander are ruling the roost. Hatchbacks have fallen behind in popularity.

Chinese brands have come a long way since their initial introduction and perception. Models like the Cherry's Tiggo 7, Tiggo 8 Pro, MG HV, and Haval

firewall, and leaked oil and rust tend to gather there as a result.

Other things worth checking are the brakes and suspension. If there are any problems, they will show up on the tyres, so make sure to see how the wear on the tyres is. Check the interior, and if it has been recently re-upholstered, make sure the materials and fabrics were properly installed and there are no gaps or rattling on the trim.

Check the chassis for rust because that's an expensive problem to fix in the future. If you are buying a hybrid, make sure the batteries and electronics are working fine, and ask for service invoices for batteries, as hybrids require specific battery maintenance.

You should also check the transmission, as improper use and maintenance of automatic gearboxes can lead to damage. A quick check is to see if the transmission shakes or jerks when in gear. It's a sign of improper use.

#### THE LEGAL STUFF

Once you have narrowed down your preferred car/model and where you want to get them from, there remains the matter of legal checklists.

Your car's engine displacement is measured by CC and the higher it is, the more tax is incurred. Engines above 1,500CC, which is the most common size of engines in Bangladesh, are taxed quite severely.

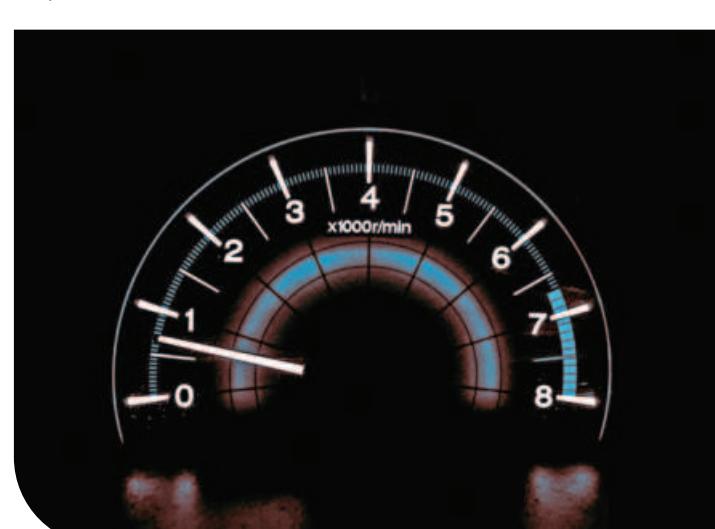
In Bangladesh, proper transfer of ownership is a must to ensure the vehicle is legally registered under your name. The authority responsible for registering vehicles is the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), and all necessary documentation must be carried out through their official channel.

The documents required are an original registration certificate, tax token, fitness certificate, insurance papers, and road permit (when applicable). If the car is reconditioned, documenting the import clearance is critical for establishing the legality of bringing the vehicle into the country.

The stakeholders should verify the identity of the car (chassis number and engine number) from the official records so that he does not become a victim of a stolen or illegally modified vehicle.

Buying your first car is an exciting, but daunting process that requires preparation and decisions based on genuine knowledge but done right, you could very well be on your way towards a kind of freedom you only dreamed of as a child.

By Intisab Shahriyar  
Photo: K Tanzeeb Zaman  
In Frame: Faisal Bin Iqbal



due to the import taxes.

If you want financing options, you do have a few. Banks usually lend at around 12 per cent interest rates, with a maximum loan limit of Tk 60 lakhs. You can get up to 70 per cent loan for hybrid sedans and 60 per cent for non-hybrid sedans. Leasing, in turn, may fulfil the entire cost of the car at the slightly higher interest rate of 15 per cent.

Hybrid vehicles have gained immense popularity, which was not the case even 5-6 years ago, due mainly to their relatively low price compared to petrol vehicles while boosting fuel economy. However, proper maintenance is necessary, but that, too, is nowhere near as complicated as people make it out to be.

These cars require some routine maintenance. This includes topping up the engine oil on service intervals, and the general consensus from dealers is to use 0w16 fully synthetic engine oil, regardless of what brand of car you drive. Then there is the battery which needs servicing every 6 months, specifically for Toyota and Honda hybrids. Then there is also the matter of a cooling fan dedicated to the batteries, which also needs cleaning every 3 to 6 months, depending on the dirt/debris that accumulates there.

Jolion are extremely popular with customers here.

While it should not be the primary concern, resale value should also be considered when making a purchase, the idea being that at the end of your ownership, you should be able to get most of your money back.

This is where Japanese brands like Toyota and Honda have an overwhelming advantage, as these cars are traditionally reliable, easy to repair, and have widespread spare parts availability.

#### CHEAP AND CHALLENGING: RECONDITIONED/USED

If you are a car guy looking to get a good deal, or you have access to one or simply want to take on a challenge, reconditioned or used cars can end up being your final decision.

While everyone knows what used cars are, reconditioned cars need a refresher for those a little foggy on details. Cars that have undergone refurbishment to meet specific standards are called reconditioned vehicles. These vehicles, sourced predominantly from Japan, are generally more affordable than new vehicles and offer a wider variety of models within any given budget.

Once you have narrowed down your price and vehicle segment, it's time to choose the condition of the firewall. Most people, when cleaning the engine bay, often neglect the



Add to that the Metro Rail, which can get you from Shahbagh to Uttara, in minutes, faster than you could ever hope to reach in a car, and the 'feel' of car ownership by using ride-sharing apps that can have any model of car appear before you, ready to take you anywhere you wish, all without the hassle of actually owning a car.

#### YOU STILL NEED IT

If you are here, that means you have concluded that a car is required to fulfil your needs. In this case, let's get to the necessary information.

The first thing to go over is

And if your family exceeds five people or more, or you regularly travel with companions, or you often travel outside the city and encounter ill-maintained roads, you could choose between minivans, crossovers, or full-blown SUVs.

#### NEW AND SPARKLY: THE EASY WAY OUT

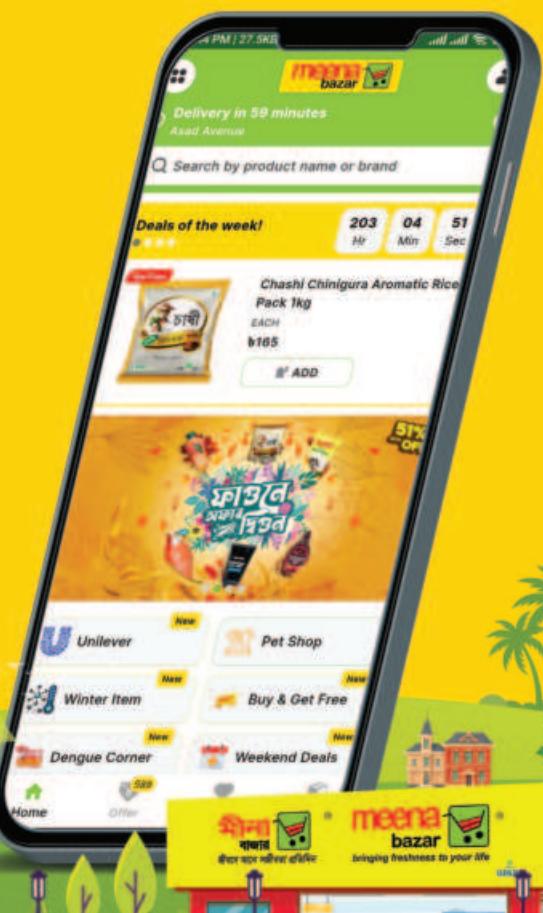
If you want the least amount of hassle and the most amount of peace of mind when buying your first car, there really is no alternative to the brand-new route. Yes, it is the more expensive route, but the benefits, for many, far outweigh the initial

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