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Fierce *and* Fearless

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REGIONAL CUISINE IN THE CITY

PHOTO:
ADNAN RAHMAN
MODEL:
ARNIRA
STYLING AND
FASHION DIRECTION:
SONIA YEASMIN ISHA
WARDROBE:
WAREZ
MAKEUP:
**SUMON RAHAT AND
TEAM**
SET DESIGN:
**ESKAY DÉCOR BY
SAIMUL KARIM**

FROM SKETCHING TO BUILDING STUDIOS

the journey of an emerging artist

It is heartbreaking, and at the same time, it feels good, like everything together makes it feel like being in a nightmare; a kind of daze — This is how Sufia Easel describes the feelings behind her art. It is a layered emotion drawn from personal struggles with anxiety and depression, a theme that runs quietly but powerfully through her work.



documentary 'Adhkhana Bhalo Chele Adha Mostaan', the director Abrar Athar contacted me," she said. "He told me that my fan art is beautiful and they want to use it as the thumbnail image for the Chorki documentary poster."

Sufia Easel graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic Design from the University of Development Alternative (UODA) in 2018. After working two jobs, she decided to fully focus on her passion: painting, and building a small business selling merchandise based on her artworks.

"I used to do a lot of pencil drawings before, mostly celebrity portraits," she shared. One of her most notable moments was when her fan art sketch of singer Shayan Chowdhury Arnob caught attention.

"Once, in Arnob's



Easel happily agreed, marking an early milestone in sharing her work with a wider audience.

Today, watercolour is her primary medium. She prefers working with darker, moody themes — loneliness, memory, and emotional turbulence. "The theme I work with is usually dark or moody," she explained. "Like depressive mood... the various dark motifs that are in our surrounding environment."

In paintings like "Alone with Letters and Memories," she created a self-portrait standing in front of a wall filled with old memorabilia: diaries, letters, and envelopes.

"The inspiration was from the city... there, two things are very commonly seen — neon lights and rows of buildings. In that urban setting, people often sit alone at home, looking at old photo albums and memories," she said.

She also explored rural settings in her art — a painting with a boy reading a book

by candlelight, another featuring herself and a rabbit under trees. "The light there is candlelight, not neon," she said, pointing out the different emotional tones she captures between urban and rural spaces.

Despite the emotional depth of her paintings, selling them has not always been easy.

"My paintings often take 100 to 150 hours to complete," she said. "Big artworks take a lot of time, very painstaking detail." Because of this, the pricing can be high, making it difficult for many to buy her original work.

"Many people might like the art but cannot afford it," she added.

To address this, Easel started selling merchandise — mugs, notebooks, tapestries, and canvas prints based on her original artwork. "I hope that since I have started releasing merchandise, everyone will be able to buy my art," she said.

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ELEGANTLY INTELLIGENT

SABRINA N BHUIYAN
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Inspired by true events, "Adolescence" traces the thoughts and actions of a teenager in modern Britain. Delving deep into the psyche of the protagonist, this show brings out the severity of unregulated internet usage on impressionable minds and how this is shaping the way society is functioning at large.

On the surface, it seems innocuous enough. Just another thirteen-year-old with a smartphone trying to make sense of the world around him, leaning heavily on, well, social media and the internet. And then, as one peels off the layers, shocking revelations emerge!

Jamie Miller, the protagonist, is looking for guidance and support in navigating his emotions and understanding of the world around him. When he finds none, Miller turns to motivational speakers such as Andrew Tate and the likes of him to shape his ideas regarding the opposite sex and how to tackle his feelings about them.

What is extremely disturbing is that an entire generation of youth is depending on such volatile individuals with zero credibility for emotional guidance. Before "Adolescence" aired, there was not much dialogue surrounding the trend. It was not like we were not aware of the negative impacts of unregulated internet usage, but now it's more real than ever.

Jamie Miller's inner turmoil and eventual outburst made me, a parent of pre-pubescent children, and parents like me everywhere sit up and take notice.

Adolescence — A Netflix show that's our wake up call



The build-up of the series is eerily similar to the way our thoughts shape around an unexpected event — one does not anticipate an impending calamity, and once in the throes of its aftermath, anxiety and tension ensue, and eventually our lives aren't quite the same.

From a regular viewer's neutral standpoint, this is a remarkable tale of lack of attention and understanding from the parents' part and how easy it is for children to get derailed in today's fast-paced world.



For parents, however, it is like a punch in the gut. Am I spending enough time with my children? Are they doing okay in school? How are they viewing friendship, and are they getting accepted by their peers for being who they are?

The greatest takeaway of the show remains the time-honoured values and principles of parenting — spend time with your children; be more involved with them.

As easy as it might be to just hand them a device to catch a much-needed break (the

lord knows we all need it) — hold back! Engage with them, do fun things together and try to get to know them. Their hopes, dreams, fears, wants, needs.

Children learn from parents and nurture the love, affection, kindness and empathy they receive at home. What they see at home, they imprint and mirror in their lives. Healthy relationship models at home are likely to encourage them to display similar behaviours outside too.

None of us is trained in child psychology, and it is impossible to discern at times what is really happening in their tangled minds. Yet, the only way to find out is by being a part of their lives, however they want us to be. Without judgment or condescension.

Most importantly, we must be judicious in allowing children to have access to social media. Constant connectivity is a source of stress and anxiety for adults, even more so for children and young children whose brains are still in the developmental stage.

"Adolescence" is more than just a show — it's a stark reminder that parenting in the digital age requires presence, patience, and proactive involvement. If we don't step in, someone else — often unqualified and potentially harmful — will. Let this be our wake up call to listen more, judge less, and truly connect with the young minds growing up in an increasingly disconnected world.

By Sabrina N Bhuiyan
Photo: Collected

KUNDALINI RISING

SHAZIA OMAR

Writer, activist and yogini
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ZONE 2 CARDIO

The path to longevity and good health



Luckily, walking in the park — my favourite way to unwind — is actually Zone 2 cardio. That means I can enjoy music, soak in nature, increase my step count, and burn fat simultaneously.

Zone 2 cardio involves exercising at 60–70 per cent of your maximum heart rate, a level where you can maintain a conversation but not sing. It's the sweet spot where your body efficiently burns fat and enhances aerobic capacity without undue strain. Think speed walking rather than running.

Engaging in Zone 2 cardio offers a multitude of health benefits:

Enhanced fat metabolism: Training in this zone optimises the body's ability to utilise fat as a primary energy source, aiding in weight management and metabolic health.

Improved mitochondrial function: Regular Zone 2 exercise increases the number and efficiency of mitochondria, the energy powerhouses of our cells, leading to better endurance and energy levels.

Cardiovascular health: It strengthens

the heart muscle, improves circulation, and can lower the risk of heart disease.

Mental wellbeing: The moderate intensity promotes the release of endorphins, reducing stress and enhancing mood.

Sustainable fitness: Unlike high-intensity workouts, Zone 2 training is gentler on the joints and muscles, making it suitable for individuals of all ages and fitness levels.

Zone 2 cardio not only promotes fat burning during exercise but also extends fat oxidation beyond the workout session. This moderate-intensity training enhances mitochondrial efficiency, enabling your body to utilise fat as a primary energy source for longer periods. As a result, you experience sustained energy levels and improved metabolic flexibility throughout the day.

Moreover, Zone 2 training helps

regulate cortisol, the body's primary stress hormone. Unlike high-intensity workouts that can cause significant cortisol spikes, potentially leading to increased fat storage, muscle breakdown, and disrupted sleep, Zone 2 cardio maintains cortisol levels within a healthy range. This balance supports better recovery, hormonal harmony, and overall well-being.

Incorporating Zone 2 cardio into your routine does not require expensive equipment or gym memberships. Aim for at least 150 minutes of Zone 2 cardio spread throughout the week. Consistency is key. Here are some accessible ways to get started:

Brisk walking: A 30–60 minute walk at a pace where you can talk but not sing.

Cycling: Riding at a steady, moderate pace on flat terrain.

Swimming: Continuous laps at a comfortable speed.

Dancing: Engaging in any dance form that elevates your heart rate moderately.

So, next time you are in the park, remember: you're not just relaxing — you're investing in your health.

#INTERVIEW

CAFÉ CULTURE, youth, and the future of coffee in Bangladesh

With over two decades of experience in consumer marketing and communications, Shammi Rubayet Karim, Head of Marketing Communications and Services at Nestlé, is no stranger to shifting trends and evolving consumer preferences. As South Asia sees a rising wave of coffee enthusiasm, especially among the youth, Karim offers insights into how this global trend is reshaping local markets traditionally rooted in tea.

In this interview with Star Lifestyle, Shammi Rubayet Karim discusses the changing beverage landscape, the opportunities and challenges for Bangladesh's coffee industry, and how companies like Nestlé are navigating sustainability, pricing pressures, and consumer demand in a rapidly transforming market.

Nestle's brand Nescafé, founded in Switzerland in 1938, was created to address a coffee surplus crisis in Brazil through an innovative process for making soluble coffee. A method that quickly became a favorite among the Swiss. Today, Nescafé is enjoyed in over 180 countries worldwide.

STAR LIFESTYLE: Global trend shows there's a higher inclination in today's youth towards coffee and hence a major shift from tea as a staple drink. Do you think this is true even in South Asia, where we are known as tea lovers? Why do you think this is so and do we have the capacity to meet the high standard of coffee to cater to the palate of the younger generation?

SHAMMI RUBAYET KARIM: There is a shift happening. More young people across South Asia are reaching for coffee over tea, even though tea still holds deep cultural roots.

The growing café culture is playing a big role in shaping these new habits. In cities like Dhaka, Delhi, Mumbai, and Jakarta, coffee shops are booming. Coffee is not just a drink anymore; it has become a full-on social experience.

Currently, Bangladesh is an import driven market for coffee. Almost 100 per cent of the instant coffees are imported with which it is very much possible to cater to the local coffee demand. However, as you know due to ongoing volatile situation, coffee consumption growth has slightly slowed down resulting negative impact in the industry.

STAR LIFESTYLE: Globally, coffee prices seem to be on the rise. What effect does it have on the Bangladesh coffee market? How do local businesses respond to such hikes?

SHAMMI RUBAYET KARIM: Global coffee prices have been rising largely due to climate challenges like droughts in Brazil and disruptions in the supply chain. The average annual price of coffee (robusta) has increased from 2,000 USD/MT to 5,400 USD/MT in the last three years, which is almost three times higher, and this is the ever highest in last 50 years as cited by popular global media house.

Even though coffee popularity is rising in Bangladesh, the inflationary situation has become a big challenge for the industry. Rising price of coffee beans coupled with higher import duty structure is resulting significant coffee price hike in Bangladesh.

As Bangladesh is an almost 100 per cent import driven coffee market, the impact got multiplied due to the forex crisis. This has resulted significant loss in our profitability as we are not passing the full cost increase impact on our beloved NESCAFÉ consumers.

We from Nestlé are trying our maximum to minimise the price hike impact by our process efficiency and cost optimisation while upholding our best-in-class product quality and taste.

As the rising prices and higher import duty structure are resulting in several adverse impacts within the industry, local businesses are trying to minimise the cost impact by taking several initiatives like offering lower quality products to keep up their profitability. Many businesses are adjusting by passing some of the costs onto consumers with small price hikes; some are also adopting wrong declarations for marketing purposes which we believe is an unethical means to establish a brand.

Some local importers are also importing coffee brands by evading import taxes and duties. This has also resulted in some group of people to come up with fake products and supplying in the market at a lower price.

STAR LIFESTYLE: Coffee is being cultivated in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Can this meet local demand? Is there an opportunity to grow more variants of coffee in our own country?

SHAMMI RUBAYET KARIM: Currently, coffee production in Bangladesh is limited, which is far from enough to meet the rising demand. The country still relies heavily on coffee imports to satisfy local consumption needs. However, there are opportunities to increase local coffee production.

Expanding cultivation beyond the Chittagong Hill Tracts could be a game changer, and pilot projects in Naogaon (northern Bangladesh) have shown promising results. Additionally, introducing more varieties of coffee, especially specialty-grade Arabica, would allow local producers to tap into the growing premium coffee market. To improve quality, investment in processing facilities and

providing training for farmers are essential.

While local coffee production is growing, it won't completely replace imports soon. The reason is higher amount of investment required to establish processing plant in Bangladesh. Here the initiatives from local companies in establishing coffee processing plant can play big role in boosting up the coffee industry. In addition, with sustained efforts in expanding cultivation and improving quality, there is significant potential to boost local coffee production in the long run.

STAR LIFESTYLE: The trend and inclination towards coffee seem to be largely positive. How does Nestlé plan to make the business more sustainable in the future?

SHAMMI RUBAYET KARIM: Globally, Nestlé has been prioritising sustainability through its NESCAFÉ Plan for about a decade now. The company is committed to several key initiatives to make its coffee business more sustainable.

One of the main goals is sustainable sourcing, with Nestlé aiming to source 100 per cent responsibly grown coffee by 2025 and by 2026 intends to plant 20 million native trees to help increase biodiversity, and to promote soil formation and soil health. In addition, they are promoting climate-smart agriculture, encouraging farming methods that use less water, prevent deforestation, and improve soil health.

Nestlé is also focused on supporting farmers by providing them with the necessary training and resources to increase their yields and adopt better farming practices. Furthermore, the company is committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, with a target of net-zero emissions across all operations. Another important part of their sustainability efforts is the shift toward eco-friendly packaging, with plans to transition to recyclable and compostable coffee packaging.

STAR LIFESTYLE: So, can we soon call our nation a land that favours coffee over tea, or is it too far-fetched an idea?

SHAMMI RUBAYET KARIM: Not in the immediate future. Tea has deep cultural roots in Bangladesh, and it's far more entrenched in daily life than coffee.

Currently, the tea-to-coffee consumption ratio is 1:90 cups a year. However, 50 per cent of our population is young and to them, coffee is quickly gaining popularity.

Considering that, within the hot beverage landscape, coffee has huge potential in Bangladesh. And companies like Nestlé are playing a big role in building up the coffee market here. However, in this journey toward the success of the coffee industry, favourable economic conditions and business environment are required.

Photo: Courtesy



#FASHION

BUYING SECOND-HAND CLOTHING

How thrifting is becoming a fashion movement

Previously looked down upon as a mark of stinginess and perceived as unhygienic by many, the trend of buying second-hand clothing is picking up nicely in the wake of climate change conversations and environmental awareness. Described using enticing terms like "pre-loved" or "pre-worn," thrifting usually involves the purchase of gently used items at reduced rates.

Aside from eco-consciousness, fashion-forward people around the world appreciate this new trend for the uniqueness of the items it offers, self-expression and nostalgia for older or vintage pieces. Unlike fast fashion, which bulk produces similar-looking clothing, thrift shopping allows consumers to cultivate a distinctive style of their own.

While the concept of online thrifting might be relatively new in the country, the practice of exploring flea markets for unique finds has been a traditional practice for decades. While touted to be export-quality stock lots that have minor defects, not all of these items are brand new.

It is important to note, however, that most buyers around the world, including those in Bangladesh, have primarily been drawn to thrifting for its affordability, rather than the environmental benefits and



sustainability of recycling clothes. This is because thrift stores often provide high-quality items at a fraction of the price of conventional marketplaces.

Nusrat Jahan Mumu, co-owner of the Facebook page "Dhaka Thrift", has been in the resale business of pre-loved clothing for four years now. "I started Dhaka Thrift as nothing but a business. It was in the thick of the pandemic, and I missed roadside shopping," she says.

Mumu knew that many like her missed thrifting, and she could attract customers through quality control and low prices.

However, thanks to the rising awareness of climate change in the country and the influence of social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, interest in second-hand shopping has significantly risen. The COVID-19 pandemic heightened this trend further, as individuals became more mindful of their consumption habits.



"Customer awareness has come a long way from when I opened shop in 2021," says Nusrat Jahan Mumu. "When I saw that more and more customers were turning to my page inspired by a will to do something for the climate, I started educating them."

The young entrepreneur says she was quite transparent on her page about the group being one that strictly sold second-hand clothing items. She fought stigmas and hygiene misconceptions around thrifting by taking measures to ensure quality, such as thoroughly cleaning and repairing clothing.

She meticulously curated her collection, ensuring that only items in good condition were offered to customers.

"The demand did not diminish even when people knew these items were pre-worn. That tells you that customers are willing to give this concept a chance if it lets them buy a good quality article of clothing at a reasonable rate," she added.

The owner of yet another Facebook group called "Decluttering Your Wardrobe", Aysha, mentions that when she was using another name for her online business, it was not as popular. However, when she switched to

words such as "Recycle Bin" and "Declutter", people flocked to her group in droves.

"I have hundreds of member requests per day, which means people are quite interested in the reselling of their clothes and other items of personal use. It is not an alien concept anymore," Aysha says.

Endorsed by celebrities and influencers, trends like "fashion flipping" — the practice of purchasing second-hand clothing to resell it — and "thrift flipping," which involves upcycling thrifited items into new creations, further cement the sustainability of pre-loved shopping within mainstream fashion.

Thrift and buying pre-loved clothes can allow shoppers to recycle their own clothing, consequently reducing their carbon footprints. Nusrat, Aysha and entrepreneurs like them have an added advantage — they can make money out of it, providing many people with a source of supplementary income from their sales and platform fees.

Shopping aside, the green mindset adopted in the country has ushered in some practical habits which are both environment and budget-friendly.

Rubab Khan, 32, recommends clothes swapping amongst like-minded friends. Clothes swapping is cost-effective and certainly doesn't compromise your sense of fashion or hygiene. "Buying clothes every week is not something I've practised, even if I could afford it. I am one person; realistically speaking, how many clothes do I ACTUALLY need?"

The communications professional further highlights that our dependency on consumer culture often creates an illusion that everyone can afford everything in the same manner, which is not the case. "Even if you come from the same social class. It's like if you don't jump that 'add to cart' bandwagon, you're somehow missing out on the latest trend."

A variety of Instagram shops curate second-hand culture, such as Vintage Ziana, @aesthersift.bd, Dhaka Vintage, and Thrift Store BD, among others. These platforms allow shoppers to discover incredible pieces at prices ranging from Tk 300 to Tk 700, making them accessible to many. Facebook platforms such as Dhaka Thrift and Decluttering Your Wardrobe have gained popularity by offering unique wares.

With more and more people opening up to the idea of second-hand shopping, this cultural shift encourages a new appreciation for clothing and its stories, moving away, thankfully, from the fast fashion mentality. As we navigate this evolving landscape, it is becoming increasingly clear that thrifting is a lifestyle choice that holds the power to bring positive changes in our society.

By Munira Fidai
Photo: Collected



STYLING SOLUTIONS

Blouses for a summer bash!

A blouse makes a saree, and the woman in it. Earlier considered to be nothing more than a slip, like its sister (the humble old petticoat), a blouse received neither love nor attention. Sure, every saree came with a similar blouse piece with a matching border,

but that was it. The earlier generation of women was not big on showing skin either and would wear blouses with mid-length or long sleeves, wrapping the *anchal* over their shoulders, keeping the blouse under wraps.

Well, that has changed and how! Nowadays, the blouse is all-important, much to the chagrin of our mothers! What's more, a halter neck blouse in silver lamé will hardly raise brows anymore. Rather, it is a perfect outfit for a summer soirée.

Times have changed, and so has our lifestyle, which is much more cosmopolitan and worldly than it ever was. It is only natural that our wardrobe reflects that evolution where the east effortlessly meets the west to create stunning styles.

A deep-plunge bralette-style blouse will complement your chic golden georgette tissue saree that, again, is another modern innovation by master textile designers who have reinvented the stiff tissue in a more fluid, diaphanous way. Wear it to a reception party being hosted outside of Dhaka, in a beautiful resort.

A low-cut blouse with mid-length sleeves is equal parts sensual and elegant. Drape your saree like the iconic ladies did in the swinging sixties — in a slim single fold and show off your toned clavicle.

Cocktail sarees ooze oodles of oomph thanks to the cocktail blouse! Chic and sophisticated, show off your chiselled back in a backless blouse to the next cocktail night or your designer friend's fashion show.

Saving the best for the last, say hello to the spaghetti strap bikini blouse that is bound to make you the belle of the ball. Worn with a gota-patti saree on a summer evening or a svelte chiffon saree for an elegant dinner party, the versatile style is just right for the fabulously stylish you!

By Sabrina N Bhuiyan
Photo: Adnan Rahman
Model: Arnira
Wardrobe: Warez (Blouse and Saree)
Style and Fashion Direction: Sonia Yeasmin Isha
Makeup: Sumon Rahat and Team
Set: Eskay Decor by Samilu Karim

Let's be honest, no matter how much we complain, summer in Dhaka has its charm. While on the one hand, there is the sweltering heat; on the other, there are sudden rains that drench our souls with love. And how can we forget those lovely dawats and parties where we let our hair down and dance the night away!



THE TASTE OF BELONGING

Regional cuisines and where to find them in Dhaka



The food scene in the city is as diverse as its people and just as expressive. And by expressive, I mean deeply personal. Food here is not just something we eat — it's something we are! In Dhaka, you don't need to scale hills or cross rivers to taste the country's rich regional delicacies. You just need to be hungry. Why? Because, no matter where you are from, there's probably a corner that smells of your childhood.

This is the metropolis's secret superpower. For a city that's relentlessly fast, loud, and crowded enough to make anyone consider monastic life, it has a surprisingly tender culinary soul. It doesn't just feed you — it reminds you who you are.

Northern Nostalgia: Kalai Ruti

This humble black gram flour (mashkalai-er-aata) flatbread from

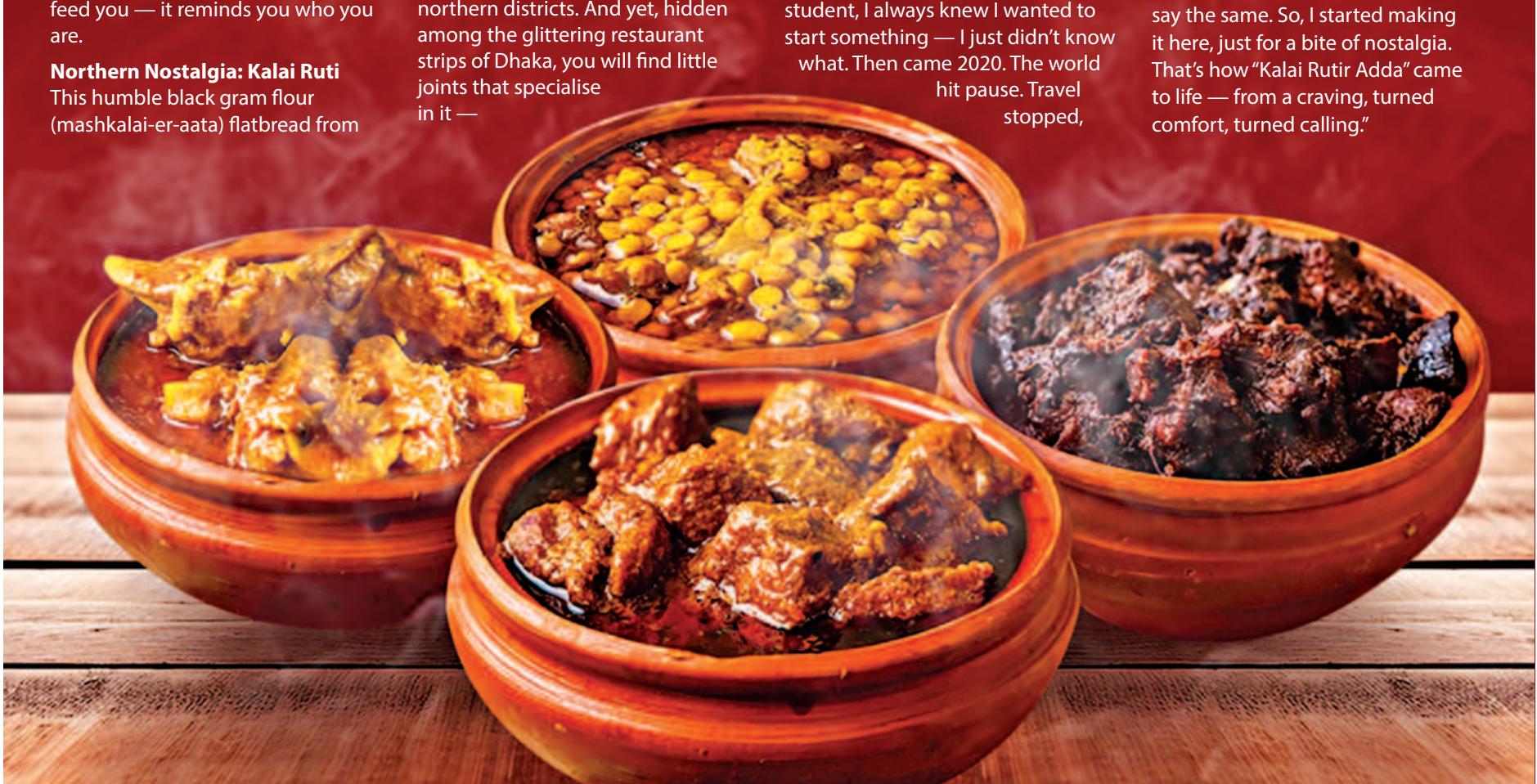
Chapainawabganj — usually served with mashed aubergine, garlic chutney, or spicy beef — is not exactly standard restaurant fare. Kalai ruti is rustic, it's intense, and it unapologetically smells like the northern districts. And yet, hidden among the glittering restaurant strips of Dhaka, you will find little joints that specialise in it —

places that know how one bite can teleport a homesick migrant right back to their village rooftop.

At "Kalai Rutir Adda" in Khilgaon, owner Rabiul Islam tells us the same with a smile, "As a business major student, I always knew I wanted to start something — I just didn't know what. Then came 2020. The world hit pause. Travel stopped,

and suddenly, I found myself craving kalai ruti. I'm from Rajshahi — and that taste, that warmth, it's part of who we are.

"Ask anyone from Rajshahi, Dinajpur, or back home — they'll say the same. So, I started making it here, just for a bite of nostalgia. That's how "Kalai Rutir Adda" came to life — from a craving, turned comfort, turned calling."





The fire of Chattogram: Mezban

Mezban is not just a meal to Chittagonians. It's a ritual. A reunion. A heartfelt excuse to gather, make amends, share news, or simply remind someone they still matter. For Chittagonians, mezban is not served — it's felt.

Shahidul Islam, the owner of "Nawab Chatga", opened his eatery in Dhaka with that same emotion in heart — to serve mezban that actually tastes like mezban. Not a watered-down version, not an imitation, but the bold, fiery dish he grew up eating in the heart of Chattogram.

"I once went to a restaurant in Bashundhara," he recalls. "They served something they called mezban, but it wasn't even close. It felt like someone had just read about mezban in a textbook and guessed the recipe." That moment made him ponder. If that's what people in the capital thought mezban was, someone had to set the record straight.

"After leaving my corporate career, the

idea of opening a Bengali restaurant in Dhaka kept coming back to me," he shares. "I just knew — if anyone was going to do justice to the authentic flavours of my home, it had to be me."

At "Nawab Chatga", authenticity is not a marketing line — it's a promise. Shahidul ensures his spices are sourced straight from Hathazari Bazar. The beef? Cooked slowly and steadily, the traditional way — in clay ovens over wood fires. No shortcuts. No compromises. Just deep, unapologetic Chittagonian flavour, served with pride.

"It has to taste like home," he says simply. And it does.

From the Hills: Hebang

Dhaka also brings the hills to the table, offering fresh, herbaceous flavours from the Hill Tracts, where indigenous recipes

add a whole new dimension to the city's food scene. Their flavours are as bold as the terrain they come from.

One such eatery is Hebang, an indigenous restaurant run by four sisters, where the air is thick with the earthy scent of bamboo shoots and slow-cooked meats. The journey of the restaurant began modestly in 2016, when the sisters started taking online orders, encouraged by university dorm friends who could not get enough of their home-cooked meals.

"They gave us the push," says Biply

Chakma, one of the co-founders. "What began in our kitchen turned into something we never expected."

By 2018, Hebang had opened a physical space, and soon, diners from across the city — not just from indigenous communities — began coming to experience the clean, understated flavours of the hills.

A city of a thousand tastes

Maybe that's what makes Dhaka's food scene so special — living here means falling in love with dishes you did not grow up with, discovering unfamiliar flavours, untold stories, and finding a sense of home in every bite. One day, you are chasing a taste from your childhood, and the next, you are craving something you only tried last year but now cannot imagine life without.

And that's the magical part. Dhaka does not just feed you — it connects you. To your roots, to each other, and to the beautiful, ever-growing mosaic of this city we all call home.

By Jannatul Bushra

Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad Ibne Sayed, Chiangmi Talukder, Nawab Chatga, Jaba restaurant



PRAN Sauce to the rescue: 3 SIGNATURE RECIPES TURNED SPECTACULAR!

If there's an ingredient that can instantly brighten up a dish with bold, irresistible flavour, it's a good sauce. A dash of tangy magic transforms everyday meals into mouth-watering delights. Each recipe we suggest below brims with comfort and just the right hint of heat, perfect when your taste buds crave something a little more exciting. Looking to spice up your meals? Know that a dash of sauce is all you need!

CHICKEN PARMESAN

Ingredients

2 skinless, boneless chicken breasts (halved); 2 large eggs; 1 cup bread crumbs; $\frac{3}{4}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese; 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour; $\frac{1}{2}$ cup olive oil; $\frac{1}{2}$ cup **PRAN Hot Tomato Sauce**; $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh mozzarella (cubed); $\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh basil (chopped); salt and freshly ground black pepper (to taste)

Method

Turn the oven on to 230 degrees Celsius. On a sturdy surface, place the chicken breasts between two sheets of heavy plastic. Using a meat mallet, firmly pound the chicken until it is $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick. Add a generous amount of salt and pepper.

Now, coat both sides of the chicken breasts with flour. In a small bowl, beat the eggs and set aside. In another bowl, combine bread crumbs and $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup Parmesan cheese; put aside. Coat chicken breasts with flour and then dip them into beaten eggs. Press crumbs into both sides of the chicken after transferring it to the bread crumb mixture. Give the chicken pieces ten to fifteen minutes to rest.

In a large skillet, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat until it starts to shimmer.

Cook the chicken in heated oil for about two minutes on each side, or until browned. In the oven, the chicken will finish cooking.

Chicken should be moved to a baking dish. Put 2 tablespoons of **PRAN HOT Tomato Sauce** on top of each breast. Place equal amounts of provolone, mozzarella, and fresh basil on top of each chicken breast. Drizzle each with $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon olive oil and sprinkle the remaining Parmesan on top.

Bake in a preheated oven for 15 to 20 minutes, or until the chicken breasts are no longer pink in the middle and the cheese is browned and bubbling. Serve!

EGGPLANT CASSEROLE

Ingredients

2 eggplants (cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch thick slices), $\frac{1}{4}$ cup **PRAN Hot Tomato Sauce**, 1 tbsp **PRAN Chilli Sauce**, 1 tbsp olive oil, 1 onion (chopped), $\frac{1}{2}$ cup mushrooms (sliced), 3 cloves garlic (minced), 3 to 4 tsp dried basil, $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp dried oregano, salt and black pepper (to taste), 1 cup cheese

Method

Preheat oven to 220 °C. Brush about 2 tablespoons olive oil onto eggplant slices, and arrange in a single layer in a shallow baking dish. Bake in the preheated oven until the eggplant is tender and browned.

Remove eggplant from oven and reduce temperature to 175 °C. Heat 1

tablespoon olive oil in a pan over medium heat, cook and stir onion, mushrooms and garlic until onion is softened. Add **PRAN Hot Tomato Sauce**, **PRAN Chilli Sauce**, basil and oregano, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer until the sauce is slightly reduced.

Season with salt and pepper. Arrange about half of the eggplant slices in a 2-quart casserole dish, top with half the sauce, and half the cheese. Repeat layering with the ingredients.

Bake in a preheated oven until hot and bubbling, about 25

minutes. Cool for about

5 minutes before serving.

CHICKEN TIKKA MASALA

Ingredients

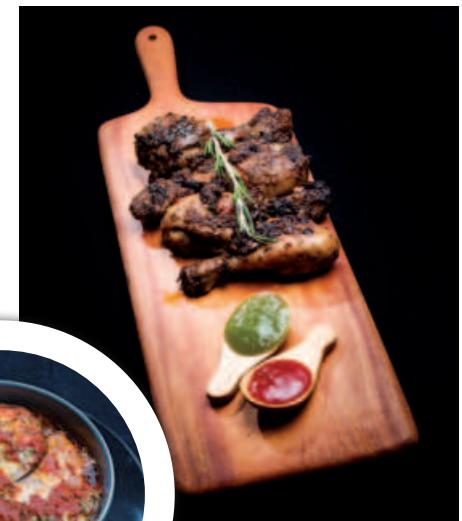
For the marinade

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup **PRAN Hot Tomato Sauce**, 500g boneless chicken (cut into pieces), 1 tsp ginger paste, 1 tsp garlic paste, 3 tbsp red chilli powder, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp turmeric powder, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp black salt, 2 tbsp yoghurt, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp garam masala powder, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp carom seeds, 2 tbsp lemon juice, $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp chickpeas flour, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp crushed red chillies

For the gravy — 4 medium onions, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup oil, 2 green capsicum (cut into 1-inch pieces), 4 medium tomatoes (seeded and cut into 1-inch pieces), 1-inch ginger (chopped), 10 garlic cloves (chopped), 1 tbsp coriander powder, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup mawa, $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp cardamom powder, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp dried fenugreek leaves, 2 tbsp fresh cream, 2 tbsp honey

Method

Place chicken in a bowl, add all



the marinade ingredients and mix well. Let them marinate for 1-2 hours. Heat oil in a flat nonstick pan, add the chicken pieces and cook for 3-4 minutes on high heat.

For the gravy, chop 2 onions. Cube the remaining two and separate the layers. Heat 3 tablespoons oil in another non-stick pan, add cubed onion layers, capsicum and tomatoes. Sauté for 2 minutes. Transfer into a bowl. Turn over the chicken pieces in the first pan and let the other side cook. Heat 2 tablespoons oil in the second pan and add cumin seeds. When they begin to change colour, add chopped onions and sauté. Add ginger and garlic to the pan and sauté. Add coriander powder, a pinch of turmeric powder and sauté for a minute. Add **PRAN Hot Tomato Sauce** and mix. Add mawa, salt, red chilli powder, green cardamom powder, fenugreek leaves and mix and continue to stir till oil begins to separate. Add chicken pieces and mix. Add fresh cream, honey and capsicum. Mix well and remove from heat.

Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad Ibne Sayed



From sketching to building studios: the journey of an emerging artist



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Looking ahead, she has plans to improve further.

"I want to license my merchandise business," she shared. She is also interested in producing archival-quality giclée prints, so that people can own high-quality reproductions of her painstaking watercolour work without the cost barrier of an original.

Easel is clear-eyed about the challenges artists face in today's fast-changing world, especially with the rise of AI-generated art. She drew a sharp line between digital painting and AI generation.

"Digital painting has its charm; it needs to be done with a graphics tablet," she



said. "But AI-generated art, I won't say that it's art. Art is something that requires specialised skills, thinking, and inspiration. Art is not generated; it is created."

She worries that serious artists will be

unfairly sidelined if AI-generated works are treated the same as human-made art.

"It seems to me that AI is like many fashion design games...it cannot be placed in the category of real art," she added.

As for the future, Easel's plan is simple and honest — "I want to draw many more beautiful pictures in my own style, my own theme, my own colour," she expressed. "And one day, I hope to open my own studio."

For Sufia Easel, art is not about speed or shortcuts. It's about sitting with memories, with wounds, with moments of fragile sweetness — and patiently painting them into something that lasts.

By Ayman Anika

Photos: Courtesy

◆ HOROSCOPE ◆



ARIES (MAR. 21-APR. 20)

You're full of drive this week—use it to start something bold. Stay focused. Your lucky day this week is Tuesday.



TAURUS (APR. 21-MAY 21)

Patience brings steady progress. Stick to what feels secure and comforting. Small joys await. Your lucky day this week is Friday.



GEMINI (MAY 22-JUN. 21)

Your words hold power—express yourself freely but kindly. A new idea may take shape. Your lucky day this week is Wednesday.



CANCER (JUN. 22-JUL. 22)

Home and heart take centre stage. Comfort comes in quiet moments shared with loved ones. Your lucky day this week is Monday.



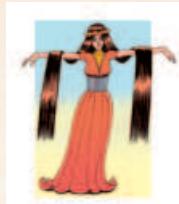
LEO (JUL. 23-AUG. 22)

Your natural charisma attracts attention. Be bold but humble. Recognition may follow. Your lucky day this week is Sunday.



VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 23)

Details matter—slow down and perfect your plan. A task brings satisfaction and peace. Your lucky day this week is Thursday.



LIBRA (SEP. 24-OCT. 23)

Balance returns to your relationships. A heartfelt conversation clears the air and strengthens bonds. Your lucky day this week is Saturday.



SCORPIO (OCT. 24-NOV. 21)

Something hidden surfaces—trust your intuition. Power comes from knowing what to release. Your lucky day this week is Tuesday.



SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

A spontaneous opportunity may lead to joy. Embrace change and trust your path. Your lucky day this week is Friday.



CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 20)

Stay committed to your goals. Quiet discipline leads to real progress. A breakthrough is near. Your lucky day this week is Wednesday.



AQUARIUS (JAN. 21-FEB. 19)

Inspiration strikes—don't dismiss wild ideas. Creative energy brings something exciting to life. Your lucky day this week is Saturday.



PISCES (FEB. 20-MAR. 20)

Dreams feel more vivid than ever. Listen to your inner voice and take a leap. Your lucky day this week is Monday.

KOHINOOR CHEMICAL

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* শুধুমাত্র **এক্সপার্ট** ডিশওয়াশ লিকুইড ৫০০ মিঃ লিঃ এর সাথে ২পিস ৭৫ গ্রাম **এক্সপার্ট** বার ফ্রী!

EBL Skybanking: Elevating the digital banking experience

Eastern Bank PLC (EBL) has set a new benchmark for digital banking in Bangladesh through its Skybanking app. Designed to offer a secure, seamless, and intuitive banking experience, the app has quickly become a preferred choice for customers. Its enhanced features and user-centric design are revolutionising how individuals manage their finances and, by doing so, shaping the future of banking in the digital age.

A streamlined and user-friendly interface

The EBL Skybanking app is designed with simplicity in mind, ensuring an easy and intuitive user experience. Its modern interface is crafted for seamless navigation, allowing users to effortlessly access a wide range of banking services. From checking account balances to transferring funds, account opening, MFS transfer, certificate downloads and paying bills, the app simplifies complex banking tasks, making them accessible even to users with minimal digital banking experience. Whether at home or on the move, the app brings essential banking services to customers' fingertips, enhancing convenience and accessibility.

Banking at your convenience

Banking at your convenience
One of the key advantages of EBL
Skybanking is its ability to offer customers
the freedom to manage their finances
anytime, anywhere. The app allows users
to complete banking transactions, such as
transferring funds, paying bills and applying
for loans, without needing to visit a physical



branch. With an intuitive user interface, these processes are faster, more efficient, and straightforward, saving users valuable time. Whether making payments while on the go or managing finances during a lunch break, EBL Skybanking ensures that banking is always convenient and hassle-free.

Easy onboarding process

Easy onboarding process
The EBL Skybanking app features an easy onboarding process for new users. With a straightforward registration and setup procedure, customers can quickly start using the app without any hassle. This

simplified onboarding experience ensures that users can start managing their finances right away, without delays or complications

Uncompromising security for enhanced protection

With the growing reliance on digital banking, security is a top priority. EBL Skybanking integrates advanced security measures, including multi-layered authentication with fingerprint and facial recognition, to safeguard user transactions. Real-time transaction alerts also notify users of any suspicious activity, providing an additional layer of protection. These

features ensure that customers can enjoy a worry-free banking experience, knowing their information and transactions are always secure.

Personalised financial management

Understanding the importance of personalised financial solutions, EBL Skybanking offers features that help users manage their finances more effectively. The app allows users to track spending patterns, providing valuable insights that enable smarter financial decision-making. By offering tailored tools to meet individual financial goals, the app empowers users to take control of their financial future with confidence.

A comprehensive banking solution

The EBL Skybanking app is more than just a mobile banking tool; it is a comprehensive platform that consolidates a variety of banking services in one place. From account management, visa fee payment, DTH payment to loan applications, the app meets banking needs in an efficient and user-friendly manner. As digital banking continues to gain traction in Bangladesh, the EBL Skybanking app remains at the forefront, offering unparalleled convenience, security, and personalised services.

With continuous improvements and commitment to user satisfaction, EBL Skybanking is redefining the future of banking in Bangladesh, enabling customers to manage their financial lives with ease and confidence.

