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COTTON

chronicles

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PHOTO: ADNAN RAHMAN
MODEL: TANIA
WARDROBE: LABEL BY IMAM HASSAN
FASHION DIRECTION & STYLING: SONIA
YEASMIN ISHA
MAKEUP: SUMON RAHAT
LOCATION: INTERCONTINENTAL DHAKA



#FYI

Architect Marina Tabassum designs London's iconic Summer Pavilion

Since the year 2000, Serpentine Galleries of London have commissioned celebrated architects worldwide to create a pavilion in their compound. The prestigious organisation is celebrated for showcasing art, design, architecture, performance, and community projects and this year is special for us Bangladeshis as the Serpentine Pavilion 2025 has been designed by our own Marina Tabassum.

In a landmark moment for South Asian architecture, Marina Tabassum and her office Marina Tabassum Architects (MTA) have become the first from the region to design the Pavilion — a space known for celebrating innovation and cultural dialogue through design. Titled “A Capsule in Time”, the pavilion is currently open to the public at Kensington Gardens in London.

“This is very exciting, and we are honoured that our firm was selected to design for the 25th anniversary of this

event,” said Tabassum, who received the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 2016 for the iconic Bait-ur-Rouf Mosque in Dhaka. “This is a major event in the world of architecture that we all look forward to and we feel truly proud to be the designers of this year.”

The structure draws inspiration from the traditional “shamiyanas” from Bengali weddings — festive canopies used across South Asia. “Soft light seeping through the fabric of shamiyanas creates a colourful atmosphere. That is something we wanted to recreate here in London,” interprets Tabassum, whose work is known for exploring the themes of light and its sensory connection to space.

The 4.8-metre-high pavilion is a flexible, open space with built-in bookshelves and a cafe at the southern end. The structure allows people from all walks of life to gather, connect and communicate under one roof. “The open courtyard space is

similar to the courtyard spaces in our villages,” shares the architect.

“A Capsule in Time” is an exploration of the relationship between time and architecture. In Tabassum’s words, time is interconnected with space, as architecture can be a tool of continuity that lasts longer than our own lifetime.

“The temporary nature of the pavilion has been an interesting theme to work with in contrast to the continuity of architecture,” elaborates Tabassum. The transience of architecture is present in the Bengal Delta, where homesteads are built and rebuilt due to the shifting course of a river.

“In the char areas we can witness this temporality of living,” as the showcase will end in October, Tabassum points to the fleetingness of space: “Currently, the pavilion is bringing so many people together, and after a while, it will all be gone.”

Tabassum’s contextual, climate-responsive, and community-driven design

clearly resonates across borders which enabled her to become the first South Asian female architect to be the designer of the pavilion. Previously, the Serpentine Pavilions have been designed by worldwide renowned architects, such as Zaha Hadid, Frank Gehry, and Álvaro Siza.

“Every time I am there, people are coming up and saying that this is one of their favourites,” remarks Tabassum, “People have accepted it and I think it is a project we can all be proud of,” she shares with contentment.

Envisioned to be transformed into a public library after the exhibit, the bookshelves currently feature a selection of books on Bengali culture, literature, poetry, ecology and Bangladesh.

The pavilion will remain open to the public till 26 October 2025.

By Tasmiah Rahman
Photo: Asif Salman

স্বপ্নের ছোয়ায়, তোমার উপমায়,
বদলে দিলে যে আমায় ...

অ্যান্ডালিনা
সোপ

রূপচর্চায় আন্ডিজাত্য...

CHEMICAL us on f /Sandalina

Understanding eating disorders in children and teens

They are more than just issues with eating. Eating disorders are serious mental health conditions that can affect children and teenagers physically, emotionally, and psychologically. In a conversation with Dr Sanjay Chatterjee, Children's Physician at Super Specialized Hospital Ltd, Dhanmondi, Dhaka, it became clear that eating disorders in children are frequently misunderstood or overlooked. Parents often think they just a phase or fussiness but, in many cases, these behaviours are rooted in something deeper.

Early red flags

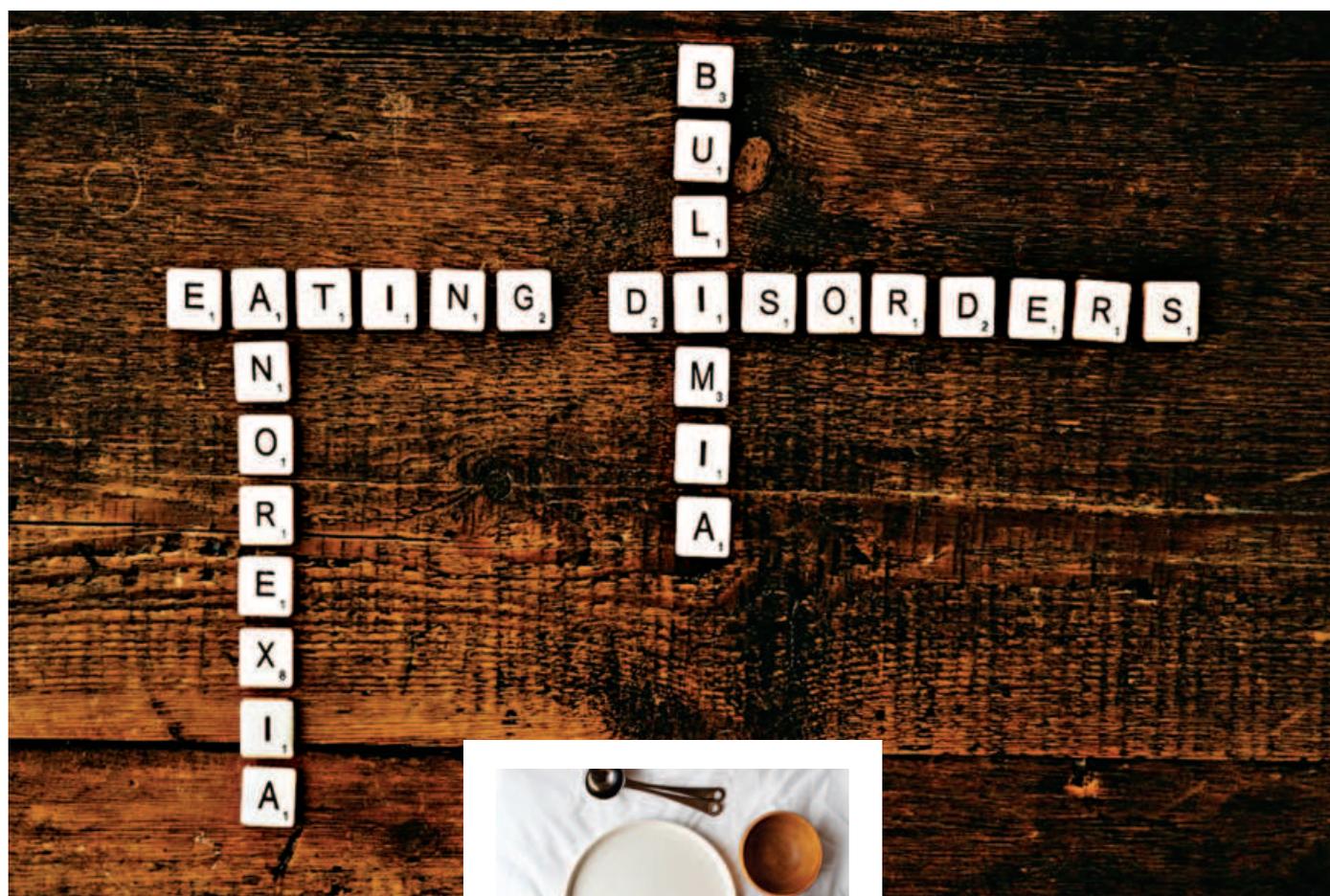
Although full-fledged eating disorders are typically diagnosed in adolescence, Dr Chatterjee emphasised that some conditions can surface much earlier. One of the most concerning is Pica, where a child repeatedly eats non-food items like wall paint, chalk, or paper.

"We've seen cases of Pica in children under two years old," he said. "It's often triggered by nutritional deficiencies — especially iron — or associated with developmental conditions like autism."

While correcting the deficiency can help, the underlying issue often needs psychological support.

"It's not just about stopping the behaviour," he added. "We need to ask why the child is doing it in the first place."

Most diagnosed eating disorders, Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa, and Binge Eating Disorder (BED), emerge during the teen years, often going unnoticed until serious harm is done.



"Anorexia is the most dangerous," Dr Chatterjee stated firmly. "It can lead to organ failure and death if left untreated. It's not just about weight — it's about control, fear, and distorted self-image."

In contrast, Bulimia and BED involve cycles of uncontrolled eating followed by guilt. "In bulimia, that guilt turns into purging or over-exercising," he said. "In BED, the guilt stays inside, and that's equally damaging."

Another lesser-known condition is Night Eating Syndrome, where children consume most of their food intake late at night. Dr Chatterjee noted that this disorder usually "comes hand in hand with depressive symptoms," and is rarely about hunger. "It's an emotional response, not a nutritional one," he said.

"In many teens I treat, the root cause is a deep insecurity about their body," he added. "But we also have to consider internal factors — mental health conditions, personality traits, trauma — all of it plays a role."

What causes them?

Eating disorders rarely stem from one source. Dr Sanjay Chatterjee explained that neurodevelopmental conditions like autism spectrum disorders, ADHD, along with anxiety, depression, or personality disorders, are often contributing factors.

"Some children are simply more



vulnerable because of how they process emotions or react to stress," he said.

However, not every case involves a diagnosed condition. "We've seen kids who are perfectionists, highly sensitive, or socially isolated," he shared. "Even without clinical depression or anxiety, their personality traits can make them more prone to disordered eating."

Recovery is about healing the mind

According to Dr Sanjay Chatterjee, recovery from an eating disorder goes far beyond simply getting the child to eat again.

The process involves rebuilding a healthy relationship with food, self-image, and emotional regulation. Medical treatment is often necessary to stabilise the child physically, especially if there are signs of malnutrition or other health complications. But real progress happens

when the emotional and psychological roots are addressed through therapy.

"Counselling plays a vital role," he says. "We work with mental health professionals to help children and teenagers understand the patterns behind their eating behaviours — what triggers them, what fears they're trying to manage."

Nutritionists are also involved to help reintroduce food in a balanced, non-restrictive way. Equally important is the involvement of the family.

"Support from parents and siblings can make or break the recovery journey," Dr Chatterjee emphasises. "Children need to feel safe, not judged, and consistently supported at home."

He warns that treating only the physical symptoms is never enough. If we do not deal with the psychological side of things, the disorder may go quiet for a while — but it doesn't go away," he said. "The goal is long-term healing, not short-term control."

If food has become a source of fear, guilt, or control for your child, it's not just a phase — it's a red flag. They are serious but treatable. Understanding the signs and acting early could mean the difference between years of struggle and a path to healing.

By Nusrath Jahan
Photo: Collected

Saline soil, cyclones, health risks — Women farmers remain resilient

In the highly saline muddy stretch of Burigoalini Union in Shyamnagar, the climate-vulnerable communities are at the frontlines of Bangladesh's climate crisis.

Nestled at the edge of the Sundarbans in the southwestern Ganges Delta, Jamuna Rani Mondal plants vegetables in buckets, her hands weathered, not from years of ease but from decades of resistance.

"I've been farming for around five years now, as I can't work in the shrimp farms like other women in my village," says Jamuna. "The recent boom in shrimp and crab farms, combined with unplanned canal conversion, is turning our water saltier and damaging our soil. I had to find other ways to survive."

Jamuna's survival is not heroic but improvisational. On lands once green with paddy, she now grows vegetables using makeshift methods such as bucket farming, cage structures, and raised platforms — designed less for efficiency and more for survival in a place where conventional farming methods no longer work.

A shifting landscape
Shyamnagar Union of Satkhira district is on the outskirts of the Sundarbans ECA (Ecologically Critical Area) where a combination of climatic and anthropogenic factors such as rising sea level, increased water and soil salinity, erratic rainfall, shrinking freshwater, shrimp and crab farming, illegal leasing and canal conversions have rendered traditional agriculture increasingly untenable, severely affecting livelihoods of climate vulnerable coastal communities.

And for women and children, the stakes are even higher.

"We hear of terms such as Climate Change and Global Warming," Jamuna says. "We may not understand what they mean, but we know we are living it."

"The heat often becomes unbearable, the crops don't grow like they used to, and every so often, we must rebuild due to the frequently increasing number of cyclones and floods,



which destroy our homes and salinate our crop fields, contaminating our freshwater sources. When the water dries up, my children and I must walk kilometres to get drinking water or be forced to drink highly saline and contaminated water."

Beyond the immediate impact on crops and livelihoods, Jamuna brings up a quiet crisis, and societally rarely addressed in public: women's health.

"In recent years, many of us are suffering from uterus problems," she says, lowering her voice. "We think it's from the salty water we use for everything — for bathing, washing, and drinking. We have no other choice," she sighs.

Health professionals in the region have long warned about the link between high water salinity and a range of gynaecological issues, including uterine infections and reproductive complications. However, formal research and medical support remain limited. For thousands of women and adolescents, it's just another health risk they must absorb in silence.

Jamuna's story is echoed in the lived realities of thousands of women across Shyamnagar. According to survey findings from the Biodiversity for Resilient Livelihoods (B4RL) project funded by the Embassy of Sweden in Bangladesh, implemented from April 2023 to September 2024, and led by the Center for Natural Resource Studies (CNRS), women are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation

due to their limited access to land, labour markets, and decision-making platforms.

The gendered geography of survival
CNRS's baseline survey confirms that women in villages 5 to 10 kilometres from the Sundarbans depend heavily on the forest's natural resources. They collect fish, crabs, snails, keora and other fruits, firewood, nipa palm, and honey.

"In forest-adjacent villages, women still hesitate to enter the Sundarbans due to



local myths," explains a CNRS' B4RL project field staff. "There's a belief that Bonbibi, the forest deity, punishes women who enter the forest during menstruation. These taboos deeply influence who gets to collect resources, and when."

Even in agriculture, gendered roles remain defined. Women engage actively in post-harvest processing, threshing, and household-level farming. But their contributions often go undervalued.

"Women do a large part of the labour but they are still treated as secondary," adds the staffer. "Men plough and harvest; women sort, carry, and process, but with less recognition and lower pay."

Wage disparities persist. A woman earns roughly Tk 70 per hour for field work, while a man earns Tk 80 for the same task.

This gendered inequality has only been compounded by the expansion of shrimp farming. As saline "ghers" replaced fertile cropland, women were marginalised as they lost access to both food and income sources.

In this altered ecology, women have turned to adaptive strategies: homestead ponds for fish farming, raised beds for vegetables, and most significantly, Keora trees (Sonneratia apetala) — salt-

tolerant, fast-growing, and deeply rooted in both soil and daily survival.

"These trees changed the way we live," Jamuna says. "Their fruits are useful, the wood is strong, and they grow where nothing else will. Even flutes are made from them."

Adapting without applause
Pushpa Rani Mondal, from Kultoli village, recalls a simpler time. "We used to grow rice only," she says. "Now we try wheat, sunflowers, and vegetables, but the soil doesn't hold water anymore. Sometimes, crops fail just before harvest."

The Biodiversity for Resilient Livelihoods (B4RL) in the Modified Ganges Delta of Bangladesh project B4RL project aims to improve management systems, which are inclusive and adaptive, that enhance social-ecological resilience, ensuring the sustainable use and protection of natural resources in Bangladesh's modified Ganges Delta and highly saline South-Western Coastal zone.

The B4RL project emphasises supporting, educating, and training Pushpa and others like her in climate-smart agriculture and adaptive agricultural techniques such as mulching, raised beds, and piloting salt-tolerant crop varieties. But adaptation doesn't mean stability, it is a constant endeavour of trial and error, learning from failed harvests and co-creating and building.

It requires reimagining resilience not as a buzzword but as a lived reality — one shaped daily by women like Jamuna and Pushpa, who navigate brine-soaked soil, cracked ponds, and social exclusion with ingenuity and grit.

"Bangladesh already has the frameworks," an expert from CNRS notes. "The National Adaptation Plan, the Gender Action Plan, they're in place. What's missing is the will to act boldly, inclusively, and from the ground up."

If adaptation is to be meaningful, women must not be framed as beneficiaries; they must be recognised as leaders. Not just because their survival depends on it. But because everyone else does too.

By Ayman Anika
Photos: Center for Natural Resource Studies (CNRS)



THINKING ALOUD

ELITA KARIM

The author is a musician and a journalist. Her X (formerly Twitter) handle is elitakarim.



THE JULY MEMORIES

In a city where life never slows down, some memories refuse to be forgotten. Memories, it seems, are timeless treasures of the heart.

They remind us of valuable moments, of cherished bits of life and the faces of our beloved. As Bob Dylan would say, one needs to take care of all your memories, for you cannot relive them.

However, there are some memories that we long to forget and wish that they had never happened. They become fragile, flickering but extremely precious, as they become painful reminders of people we love, after we have lost them. The month of July is filled with such tumultuous moments, that it might take the nation years to recover from the traumatic experiences from the last few years.

It has been 9 years today, but the memories of the tragedy that unfolded on road 79 in Gulshan 2, still haunt us and probably will do so for years to come. This long stretch of road, just wide enough for two cars to cross each other from opposite directions, is perpetually semi-lit. Almost a decade ago on this day, the road was filled with journalists from all over the world—waiting for hours for updates. The Holey Artisan attack, that had stolen the lives of so many, including tourists, friends and young university students, is now a memory that we cannot and should not shrug off as just another incident.

The attack resulted in the deaths of 22 people: 20 civilian hostages, and two police officers. Among the civilian victims, 18 were foreign nationals (nine Italians, seven Japanese, one US citizen, and one Indian). The attack involved a 12-hour siege before commandos stormed the cafe, killing the six gunmen and arresting one. Not only did the Holey Artisan attack forever change the lives of the families of the victims, but also

added a dimension to the evolving and changing political narrative of Bangladesh.

Even today, a certain feeling of restlessness and distress looms over road 79. The resident-buildings and the massive gates built in the early 90s, seem to exist indifferently. The ache of loss is sharpened by how vividly we remember. In fact, one is reminded of the famous song by the Eagles – programmed to receive, but one can never leave.

“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.” – Mother Teresa. And amidst these ripples, often emerge young leaders and doers who end up sacrificing their lives for their nation. July will forever be etched in the minds of most deshis, especially the ones belonging to generation Z – who fearlessly stood against oppression, marched towards a groundbreaking revolution that led to the fall of the authoritarian government, in the process losing a thousand lives and more. Today, many are looking back to a year ago, remembering the revolution that had taken place in the streets of Bangladesh. Based on deaths reported by various credible sources, a United Nations



report estimates that as many as 1,400 people may have been killed between July 1 July and August 15, in 2024. Thousands were injured, the vast majority of whom were shot by Bangladesh's security forces. Of these, the report indicates that as many as 12-13 percent of those killed were children. Bangladesh Police reported that 44 of its officers were killed.

The slogans and the young voices have been reverberating for some time now and once again today, they come alive, while families of the martyrs of all ages try their best to bear with the pain of losing their loved ones in the face of the atrocities that were committed. Bloodstains still fresh and hearts still aching, the scars would surely stay alive for generations to come.

Loss changes us. It teaches us that memory is both wound and balm. And in a world that keeps moving forward, remembering becomes a form of resistance—a way of saying: they mattered. They still do. May the sacrifices be remembered and honoured forever – of young fighters, changemakers, people leading regular lives, those trying to voice out and the supporters of freedom – simply for a stronger and a peaceful Bangladesh.

Photo: Collected

#READER'S CHIT

Why I'm not married yet — and why that shouldn't worry you

“So, what kind of boy are you looking to marry?” — The first move is made. The room goes silent. The girl in question, who was quietly minding her own business a minute ago, looks up and smiles. She knows how this goes; how this conversation ends. She doesn't want to be rude so she indulges anyway. With every requirement she states, the frown on everyone's forehead gets deeper and deeper. She almost feels bad for how hopeless they look at this point.

Because you see, it's never about actually listening to her preferences and perhaps finding a potential someone according to it. No, it is about 'settling down.' Neatly, quietly and above all, quickly. They are just waiting for her to finish talking so they can start.

“Don't you think you're being a little unrealistic? “Life is no fiction! You can't expect someone to come knocking at your door. You can't really expect a 10 on 10!”

And all she can think is, why not? How do they get to decide her fate while theirs was decided by the divine?

Society has a strange way of giving women *just enough* freedom to choose, but only within boundaries that keep everyone else comfortable. She is encouraged to be independent, build a career, grow. However, if she remains unmarried after a certain age, not because she's against marriage, but perhaps hasn't found the right one, all her life choices are put on trial.

Her ambition becomes a liability. Her self-respect gets mistaken for ego. Her standards are seen as stubbornness, and her desire for a meaningful relationship is labelled fantasy.

Perhaps, the most disheartening experience is dealing with those who come off as allies.

These people are different from the loud ones. They listen to her preferences

patiently, nod with approval, even echo back her thoughts, “You're doing the right thing, don't settle.”

And for a moment, she believes she's understood. But then, one day, they casually drop a “suggestion” — a marriage proposal that checks none of the boxes she had clearly outlined. Worse, it comes wrapped in sugar coated pressure: “He's a good man. He comes from a good family! Will keep anyone happy.”

As if happiness is a one-size-fits-all promise and her voice was just noise to be politely tolerated until a “better” idea came along. It's not just disappointing; it's a heartbreak.

Here's the truth though. She's not rushing because she knows what happens if, God forbid, the 'ideal match' goes south at any point.

Wanting a kind, compatible partner is not asking for too much. Wanting to be seen and respected in a relationship is

not unrealistic. A girl who knows what she wants is not a liability. She's someone who has grown through experience, and she deserves to wait for someone who meets her there.

So, the next time you meet an unmarried girl who is secure and self-assured, don't pity her. Don't probe. Don't pretend to support her just to later present a life she never asked for. Listening to her, only to ignore everything she said, isn't kindness — it's erasure.

She's not waiting for just 'anyone.' She's waiting for something compatible, something aligned, something that doesn't ask her to shrink. Her choice isn't delusion; it's clarity. And in a world that constantly tries to rush, dismiss, and negotiate her worth, the quiet strength of standing her ground deserves respect, not reform.

By Nusrath Jahan
Photo: Collected



COTTON SAREE

The quintessential summer wear

Combining comfort with style, the cotton saree is breathable, versatile, and traditional. Natural fibre allows air to circulate efficiently, helping to keep the body refreshed during hotter days. Unlike synthetic fabrics that can trap heat, cotton keeps one cool and comfortable. Moreover, the ease with which they can be draped makes them all the more appealing to women, irrespective of age.



"I don't know why people think sarees are a hassle," shares Moumita Choudhury, a 30-something school teacher. "Honestly, give me a saree over a kameez any day! It spares me the annoyance of keeping my orna in place, it's a skirt that provides ventilation — to me, a saree is a blessing!"

Purchasing cotton sarees in Dhaka is a breeze. From smaller shops in good old New Market to bigger malls such as Jamuna Future Park and Bashundhara City,

popular among the younger crowd, in that they offer eclectic designs and motifs that increasingly appeal to the saree enthusiasts of today. These stores usually offer naturally dyed, hand-woven sarees which have steeper prices than machine-made sarees and cater to a niche clientele.

"Desi Dosh at Bashundhara City has had my heart, ever since it came into existence," mentions Dr Onora Khan. "I know it is a little on the pricey end, but I pay

printed cotton saree with minimal jewellery creates a comfortable and effortless look. Officegoers are regularly seen donning the saree this way.

One can also give the traditional saree a modern glow-up by choosing contemporary blouses: off-shoulder, sleeveless, loose tops, crop tops or cape styles, and pairing them with traditional sarees for a fusion appearance.

Others interpret the most common Nivi style of saree draping in their own way.

Farah Somi, a social worker, for instance, loves to play around with accessories.

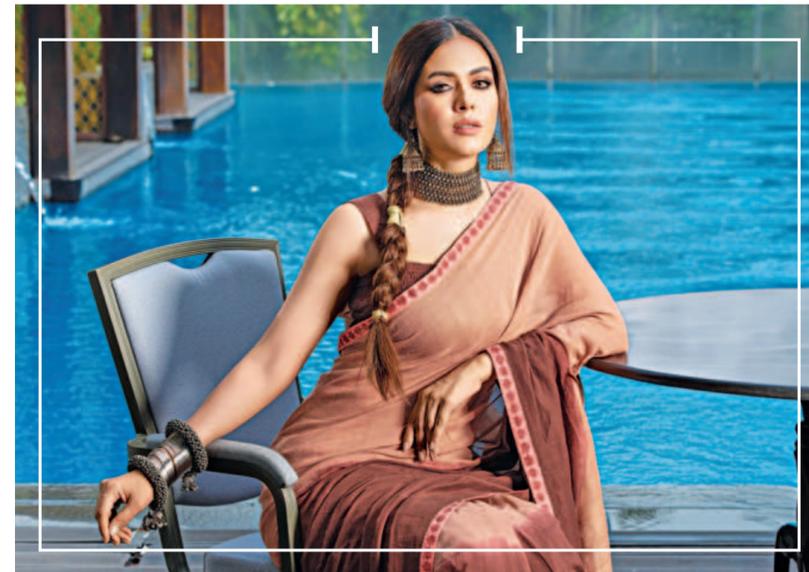
"I add belts, you'll see me pulling the anchal through bangles; I sometimes even wrap it around the neck, scarf style!"

The Gujarati style, with pleats tucked at the front and the anchal draped over the right shoulder, offers another elegant option, especially for sarees with more intricate work around the anchal. For a more contemporary appeal, some wearers opt for the fishtail style, which involves pleating the saree tightly around the legs for a sleek and modern look.

A saree drape that is gaining increasing popularity is the "dhoti style". Worn over tights rather than petticoats, this style of draping mimics the traditional dhoti garment, covering both legs in the saree separately. This style is hassle-free, comfortable and a great choice for semi-formal parties.

Very close to the dhoti style is the "pants style" of draping a saree. In this method, the saree is pleated and tucked into the waistband of the pants, with the anchal draped over the shoulders or across the body, creating a sleek look that fuses tradition and Western style.

With all its evolution, the cotton saree continues to be an irreplaceable and empowering choice for women, especially in the heat of Dhaka. Gracefully combining cultural heritage with modern aesthetics, it continues to validate its status as a timeless and trendy summer essential for Bengali saree lovers.



one can find a wide variety of sarees in a multitude of colours, virtually anywhere.

Price points vary in terms of quality and location, with smaller shops offering wares at more reasonable, negotiable prices than malls. Traditionally, prices for cotton sarees start from Tk 300 and go up to a few thousand.

Deshi stores such as Aarong, Jatra, Aranya, etc. are

for quality and for uniqueness."

Even a few years ago, draping a saree was a simple, two-minute job, with front pleats and a pleated or loose anchal. Some wearers also went for anchals in front, down one shoulder. Now, however, styling a cotton saree has become a creative process that varies according to personal preference and occasion.

For daily wear, for instance, pairing a plain or

By Munira Fidai
Photo: Adnan Rahman
Model: Tania
Wardrobe: LABEL by Imam Hassan
Fashion Direction & Styling: Sonia Yeasmin Isha
Makeup: Sumon Rahat
Location: Intercontinental Dhaka

Kebabs, curries, and the art of COOKING MEAT

If there's one thing that elevates any family gathering or just a weekend indulgence, it's a lineup of perfectly spiced, lovingly prepared meat dishes. The following recipes are more than just meals — they are culinary rituals steeped in tradition, bursting with flavours, and made to be shared.

This collection brings together some of the most beloved South Asian meat dishes — grilled, slow-cooked, or simmered to perfection. Whether it's the royal aroma of *Mutton Patiala*, the nostalgic charm of *Beef Dam Kebabs*, or the soul-soothing *Mutton Shorba*, each dish celebrates the richness of spices and the comforting depth of home-cooked goodness.

So, sharpen your knives, warm your pans, and let the marination begin — a flavourful journey awaits.

MALAI TIKKA KEBAB

Ingredients

For marination —

- 1 kg boneless chicken (preferably thigh pieces, cut into cubes)
- ½ cup thick yoghurt (hung curd)
- ½ cup fresh cream
- 3 tbsp cream cheese or grated processed cheese
- 2 tbsp ginger-garlic paste
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 3 tbsp corn flour (or besan/gram flour)
- 3 tbsp oil or melted butter
- 2 green chillies (finely chopped or crushed)
- 1 tsp white pepper powder
- ½ tsp garam masala powder
- ½ tsp cardamom powder

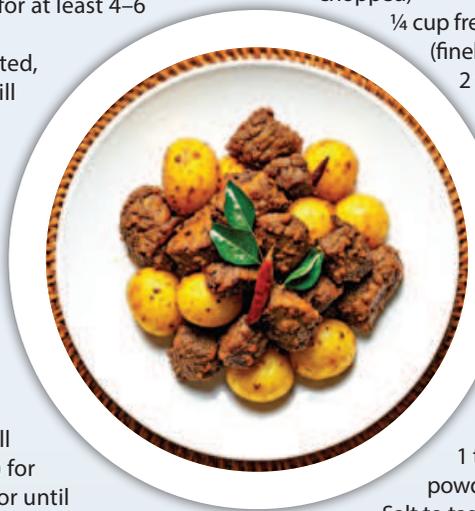
Salt to taste

Method

Take boneless chicken, cut into medium-sized cubes, and pat them dry with a paper towel. In a large bowl, combine all the marinade ingredients except the chicken and mix thoroughly to form a creamy mixture. Add the chicken pieces, coat them well with the marinade, cover, and refrigerate for at least 4–6 hours.

Once marinated, preheat your grill or oven. Thread the chicken pieces onto skewers. If using an oven, line a baking tray with foil and place a wire rack on top. Arrange the skewers on the rack and grill at 200°C (390°F) for 20–25 minutes or until the chicken is cooked through and slightly charred at the edges. Baste with a little butter or oil halfway through cooking for extra richness.

Alternatively, the kebabs can be cooked in a non-stick pan or on a stovetop grill. Once done, sprinkle with chaat masala and garnish with chopped coriander leaves and lemon wedges. Serve hot with mint chutney or garlic mayo.



BEEF DAM KEBAB

Ingredients

- 1 kg beef mince (with a little fat, finely ground)
- 2 medium onions (finely chopped or ground and squeezed to remove water)
- 2 tbsp ginger-garlic paste
- 3 green chillies (finely chopped or crushed)
- ½ cup fresh coriander leaves (finely chopped)
- ¼ cup fresh mint leaves (finely chopped)
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 2 tbsp roasted gram flour (or besan)
- 1 tsp cumin powder
- 1½ tsp coriander powder
- 1 tsp red chilli powder
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- 1 tsp garam masala powder
- Salt to taste
- 2 tbsp ghee or oil (for kneading)
- 1 tsp kewra water or rose water (optional, for aroma)

Method

In a large bowl, combine all the ingredients. Mix and knead well for 8–10 minutes until soft and binding. Cover and marinate in the fridge for 1–2 hours. After marination, shape the mixture into round kebabs or flat patties. Heat a

little oil and place the kebabs on low to medium flame. Cover with a lid and let them cook slowly in their own juices (this is the “dam” method) for about 10–12 minutes on each side, flipping gently halfway through. Cook until they are evenly browned and cooked through.

For extra flavour, place a small piece of hot charcoal in the pan, put a small bowl or foil cup beside the kebabs, add a drop of oil on the coal, and immediately cover the pan for 5 minutes to give a smoky aroma.

Serve hot with green chutney or with naan and raita for a hearty meal.

SMOKED BEEF MASALA

Ingredients

- 1 kg beef (boneless, cut into small cubes)
- 2 medium onions (finely sliced)
- 2 tomatoes (chopped)
- 2 tbsp ginger-garlic paste
- 1 cup yoghurt (well beaten)
- 2–3 green chillies (slit or chopped)
- ½ cup oil or ghee
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 2 tsp red chilli powder
- 1½ tsp coriander powder
- 1 tsp turmeric powder
- 1½ tsp garam masala powder
- Salt to taste
- ½ cup fresh coriander leaves (chopped)
- 1 small piece of charcoal (for smoking)
- 1 tsp ghee (for smoking)

Method

Heat oil or ghee in a heavy-bottomed pan and add cumin seeds, allowing them to splutter. Add chopped onions and sauté until golden brown.



Saline soil, cyclones, health risks — Women farmers remain resilient

In the highly saline muddy stretch of Burigoalini Union in Shyamnagar, the climate-vulnerable communities are at the frontlines of Bangladesh's climate crisis.

Nestled at the edge of the Sundarbans in the southwestern Ganges Delta, Jamuna Rani Mondal plants vegetables in buckets, her hands weathered, not from years of ease but from decades of resistance.

"I've been farming for around five years now, as I can't work in the shrimp farms like other women in my village," says Jamuna. "The recent boom in shrimp and crab farms, combined with unplanned canal conversion, is turning our water saltier and damaging our soil. I had to find other ways to survive."

Jamuna's survival is not heroic but improvisational. On lands once green with paddy, she now grows vegetables using makeshift methods such as bucket farming, cage structures, and raised platforms — designed less for efficiency and more for survival in a place where conventional farming methods no longer work.

A shifting landscape
Shyamnagar Union of Satkhira district is on the outskirts of the Sundarbans ECA (Ecologically Critical Area) where a combination of climatic and anthropogenic factors such as rising sea level, increased water and soil salinity, erratic rainfall, shrinking freshwater, shrimp and crab farming, illegal leasing and canal conversions have rendered traditional agriculture increasingly untenable, severely affecting livelihoods of climate vulnerable coastal communities.

And for women and children, the stakes are even higher.

"We hear of terms such as Climate Change and Global Warming," Jamuna says. "We may not understand what they mean, but we know we are living it."

"The heat often becomes unbearable, the crops don't grow like they used to, and every so often, we must rebuild due to the frequently increasing number of cyclones and floods,



which destroy our homes and salinate our crop fields, contaminating our freshwater sources. When the water dries up, my children and I must walk kilometres to get drinking water or be forced to drink highly saline and contaminated water."

Beyond the immediate impact on crops and livelihoods, Jamuna brings up a quiet crisis, and societally rarely addressed in public: women's health.

"In recent years, many of us are suffering from uterus problems," she says, lowering her voice. "We think it's from the salty water we use for everything — for bathing, washing, and drinking. We have no other choice," she sighs.

Health professionals in the region have long warned about the link between high water salinity and a range of gynaecological issues, including uterine infections and reproductive complications. However, formal research and medical support remain limited. For thousands of women and adolescents, it's just another health risk they must absorb in silence.

Jamuna's story is echoed in the lived realities of thousands of women across Shyamnagar. According to survey findings from the Biodiversity for Resilient Livelihoods (B4RL) project funded by the Embassy of Sweden in Bangladesh, implemented from April 2023 to September 2024, and led by the Center for Natural Resource Studies (CNRS), women are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation

due to their limited access to land, labour markets, and decision-making platforms.

The gendered geography of survival
CNRS's baseline survey confirms that women in villages 5 to 10 kilometres from the Sundarbans depend heavily on the forest's natural resources. They collect fish, crabs, snails, keora and other fruits, firewood, nipa palm, and honey.

"In forest-adjacent villages, women still hesitate to enter the Sundarbans due to



local myths," explains a CNRS' B4RL project field staff. "There's a belief that Bonbibi, the forest deity, punishes women who enter the forest during menstruation. These taboos deeply influence who gets to collect resources, and when."

Even in agriculture, gendered roles remain defined. Women engage actively in post-harvest processing, threshing, and household-level farming. But their contributions often go undervalued.

"Women do a large part of the labour but they are still treated as secondary," adds the staffer. "Men plough and harvest; women sort, carry, and process, but with less recognition and lower pay."

Wage disparities persist. A woman earns roughly Tk 70 per hour for field work, while a man earns Tk 80 for the same task.

This gendered inequality has only been compounded by the expansion of shrimp farming. As saline "ghers" replaced fertile cropland, women were marginalised as they lost access to both food and income sources.

In this altered ecology, women have turned to adaptive strategies: homestead ponds for fish farming, raised beds for vegetables, and most significantly, Keora trees (Sonneratia apetala) — salt-

tolerant, fast-growing, and deeply rooted in both soil and daily survival.

"These trees changed the way we live," Jamuna says. "Their fruits are useful, the wood is strong, and they grow where nothing else will. Even flutes are made from them."

Adapting without applause
Pushpa Rani Mondal, from Kultoli village, recalls a simpler time. "We used to grow rice only," she says. "Now we try wheat, sunflowers, and vegetables, but the soil doesn't hold water anymore. Sometimes, crops fail just before harvest."

The Biodiversity for Resilient Livelihoods (B4RL) in the Modified Ganges Delta of Bangladesh project B4RL project aims to improve management systems, which are inclusive and adaptive, that enhance social-ecological resilience, ensuring the sustainable use and protection of natural resources in Bangladesh's modified Ganges Delta and highly saline South-Western Coastal zone.

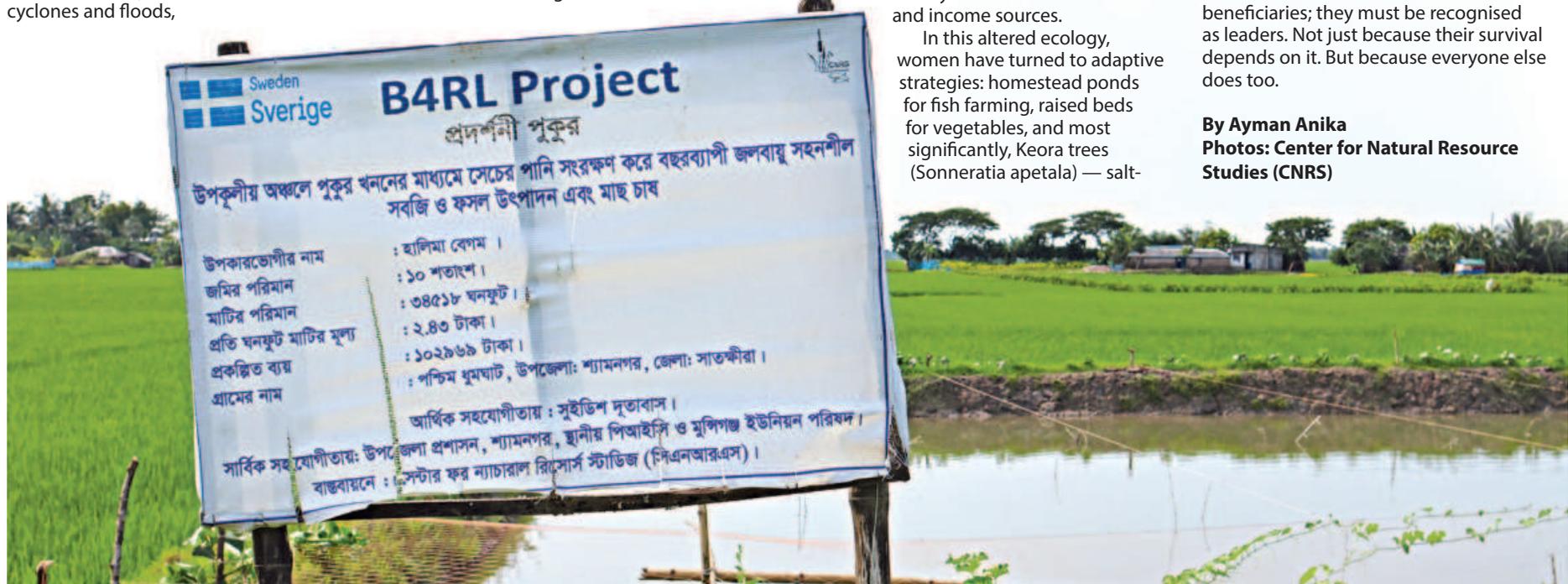
The B4RL project emphasises supporting, educating, and training Pushpa and others like her in climate-smart agriculture and adaptive agricultural techniques such as mulching, raised beds, and piloting salt-tolerant crop varieties. But adaptation doesn't mean stability, it is a constant endeavour of trial and error, learning from failed harvests and co-creating and building.

It requires reimagining resilience not as a buzzword but as a lived reality — one shaped daily by women like Jamuna and Pushpa, who navigate brine-soaked soil, cracked ponds, and social exclusion with ingenuity and grit.

"Bangladesh already has the frameworks," an expert from CNRS notes. "The National Adaptation Plan, the Gender Action Plan, they're in place. What's missing is the will to act boldly, inclusively, and from the ground up."

If adaptation is to be meaningful, women must not be framed as beneficiaries; they must be recognised as leaders. Not just because their survival depends on it. But because everyone else does too.

By Ayman Anika
Photos: Center for Natural Resource Studies (CNRS)



#HEALTH & FITNESS

Are you eating right this summer? A nutritionist's guide to healthy diets

In the sweltering heat of a Bangladeshi summer, our bodies crave something different. Rather than sticking to our usual diet, one needs to bring change in food habits. It is common knowledge that our body needs to replenish the water lost. While this is key, is it enough?

We spoke to Chowdhury Tasneem Hasin, Chief Clinical Dietician and HOD, Dietetics and Nutrition, United Hospital Ltd on what dietary changes one should make to stay healthy in summer.

The following are some of the suggestions she shared.

Add probiotics

Natural probiotics like yoghurt are essential

for summer. It helps not only in retaining the water content of the body but also boosts immunity and aids in digestion. One to two servings of yoghurt every day during warmer months of summer are recommended.

Cut down on coffee/tea

In the raging heat, it is a good idea to cut down on coffee and tea. They act as diuretics, which essentially translates to a higher rate of expulsion of water from the body. Go for a glass of lemon juice instead.

Vitamin C

Speaking of lemon juice... a good amount of vitamin C also means a strong immunity. Try to add other sour ingredients to your

summer diet.

A "nay" for salt

Reduce your salt intake. Say no to your cravings for chips and *chanachur* as they tend to increase the sodium intake in your body. A lower sodium level is also essential for maintaining blood pressure.

Stick to fish

Animal protein is hard for us to digest. You will feel much relieved and light if you shift your source of dietary protein from red meat to fish. An added benefit is that fish reduce inflammation, while also lowering triglyceride and cholesterol levels.

Certain fish are rich in omega-3, which reduces inflammation.

Preservation essentials

High temperatures often aid in the proliferation of harmful bacteria. Food gets putrid earlier in summer than in other seasons. So, even if you are preserving food in a refrigerator, she suggests that it should be stored temporarily and not for prolonged periods.

Stay hydrated

One cannot reiterate enough the need for hydration in summer. An average human being needs 2-2½ litres of water. Go for mineral water, if possible, as it contains potassium, which helps in water retention.

By Mannan Mashhur Zarif

Photo: Collected

◆ HOROSCOPE ◆



ARIES

(MAR. 21-APR. 20)
Don't issue ultimatums this week. Overspending on entertainment could hurt your budget. Address children's concerns with care. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



TAURUS

(APR. 21-MAY 21)
Avoid risky financial ventures. Too many people involved in disputes will ruin friendships. Channel your energy into something productive. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



GEMINI

(MAY 22-JUN. 21)
Look into making home improvements. Problems can arise with co-workers. Your overloaded schedule is beginning to show. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



CANCER

(JUN. 22-JUL. 22)
Work-related social events may arise. Someone close may feel hurt if ignored. Finish pending projects immediately. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



LEO

(JUL. 23-AUG. 22)
Watch out for health issues if overworked. Stay busy with enjoyable tasks. Emotions could be harder to control. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



VIRGO

(AUG. 23-SEP. 23)
Speak to your boss about long-term goals. Don't vent to friends about your relationship. Someone may claim credit for your efforts. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



LIBRA

(SEP. 24-OCT. 23)
Trust your instincts and take action. Write down your ideas. Home improvements will be appreciated. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



SCORPIO

(OCT. 24-NOV. 21)
Restrictions might feel unbearable. This is a good time for career decisions. Control your emotions. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



SAGITTARIUS

(NOV. 22-DEC. 21)
You'll meet someone significant. Avoid lending or borrowing. Communication with your partner may be unproductive. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



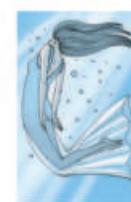
CAPRICORN

(DEC. 22-JAN. 20)
Your effort at work will be recognised. Avoid conflicts with your boss. A past love might reappear. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



AQUARIUS

(JAN. 21-FEB. 19)
A true friend will offer sound advice. Your money-saving ideas are spot on. Follow your dreams. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



PISCES

(FEB. 20-MAR. 20)
Think about overseas job opportunities. Avoid giving anyone reason to gossip. Stay alert to sabotage at work. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



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TRAVEL

From clay hills to tranquil rivers: Discovering Birishiri

Mymensingh is Bangladesh's best-kept travel secret, and Birishiri is the jewel in its crown. It offers scenic views that are raw and almost untouched—and even for seasoned travellers, it is not just about ticking boxes. It's about seeing something closely and experiencing it deeply. You will most likely remember every spot long after returning home



China Matir Pahar, Birishiri Lake

The place is famous for its Cheena Matir Pahar or "China Clay Hills," named after the deposits of coloured clay found in the area. This hill stands in gentle contrast to the surrounding greenery, creating a beautiful landscape. Although small in height, it is striking in appearance. Many travellers choose to climb the hills for panoramic views of the surrounding areas. During certain times of the year, especially after rain, the clay pits take on shades of blue and green, giving the place an almost surreal quality.

If the hills are the heart of Durgapur, the Someshwari River is its soul. The waters are clean; the riverbanks are sandy. A boat ride along the Someshwari, especially in the rainy season, is nothing short of therapeutic. During winter, the river thins, revealing walkable stretches—perfect for a moment in solitude. The change in scenery from one season to the next makes each visit feel new.

However, it is not just scenic views that make travelling to Birishiri appealing. The warmth of the people is

something to look forward to too. They are famed for their resilience, and for their role in the death-defying Tonk Movement; a historical chapter that still echoes through the region. The armed struggle, a parallel but different movement from the Tebhaga Movement, was waged by the Hajong community at the end of the British colonial period. Today, the Tonk Memorial in Durgapur stands in honour of those who gave their lives for justice and land rights.

Essentials —

The journey to Birishiri may not be the smoothest; there are no airport



Kamalabagan

drop-offs or fancy tour buses waiting for you. Instead, there are dusty roads, unpredictable public transport, and a definite lack of luxury. But for those willing to trade comfort for experience, the rewards are well worth it.

Travel to Durgapur, Netrokona by bus or car. From there, local electric rickshaws and boats are your best bet to explore



Tonko Memorial

the surrounding area. Know that there are very few options for an overnight stay in Netrokona, but Birishiri is doable as a day trip from Mymensingh, or even from Dhaka if you are adventurous enough and start early.

The seasons paint the landscape in a different palette every few months. So, no matter when you visit, there is something on offer. If you want to experience the beauty of the Someshwari River in its full glory, monsoon is the time you should visit. Otherwise, winter offers more comfortable travel conditions—dry weather, walkable trails, and cooler temperatures—and is highly recommended.

LS DESK

Photo: Shahrear Kabir Heemel



Someswari River