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LIFE Style

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The Jeweller of Queens

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PHOTO: ADNAN RAHMAN
MODEL: ERA
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JEWELLERY: 6 YARDS STORY
MAKEUP: SUMON RAHAT
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#LIFEHACKS

Easy, simple changes to live a greener lifestyle

In today's world, environmental concerns are more pressing than ever. However, making a positive impact on the planet does not require drastic measures. Simple, everyday changes can collectively contribute to a healthier and greener future.

From reducing waste and saving energy to supporting sustainable practices, we explore practical tips and ideas to help you integrate eco-friendly habits into your daily lives.

Save energy

It's true that carbon emissions cannot be stopped entirely, but you can contribute by cutting them down through conserving energy and starting from your home. All it takes is a flick of a switch!

It will surprise you that much of the energy (and your money) you can save is by flipping switches off as you leave a room.

You can install energy-efficient bulbs, for example, LED ones, instead of aesthetic-looking incandescent bulbs. These LED bulbs use 75 per cent less energy and last 30 times longer, which is a sure win for your pocket and Mother Earth.

Switch to reusables

Switching to reusables is the most straightforward way to reduce waste, which promotes a cleaner environment and healthier ecosystems.

You can start by using containers and bottles that are not plastic in a place where you possibly spend your time the most: the office. You can keep a mug to serve the purpose in your workstation instead of using plastic bottles and cups for water and drinks you take throughout the day.

Earthen containers and bottles can be a good alternative as they do not carry toxic compounds that contaminate food. Earthen bottles keep water cool, making them an excellent choice over plastic ones. Many functional yet stylish designs make reusable items a way to express yourself while helping save the planet.

Reduce meat consumption

The beef we see at our dinner table or the steak we consume in high-end restaurants adds to the climate crisis, as raising beef generates methane, a planet-warming gas. Going for a plant-heavy diet is unrivalled, but it doesn't mean removing meat completely.

If you are having meat every day, try cutting it from the menu at least one day a week. A meatless meal now and then might introduce you to delectable and nutritious food you may not have considered trying — a tasty exploration that could benefit your health and the planet.

You can also try involving poultry in your intake, as it has a low climate impact.

Use less fuel for transport

If you have a car or an automobile that uses fuel, leaving it at home reduces carbon footprints considerably. Options like walking, biking, or public transport ensure the emissions are low. Walking or biking to work or a short-distance errand adds to your and the environment's good health. For long distances, mass transit or carpooling with a friend or colleague is a good option.

If you feel adventurous, you can take up the challenge of treading long distances on foot. The triple package of exercise, fresh air, and money saved on fuel is a fantastic green-friendly choice all around!

Make meaningful purchases

Meaningful purchases on your part will bolster a greener lifestyle in your daily routine. The world generates 2.01 billion metric tonnes of solid waste every year, and it's up to us to counteract it.

You can buy good used furniture instead of new ones and choose high-quality products that will not end up in a landfill a year later.

Fast fashion has been all the rage for years, and its grasp did not exclude our closets. Instead of deciding to buy these sorts of clothes, you can make sustainable fashion a trend by purchasing basic pieces that can be worn in several ways.

Learn about sustainability

With the ready access to the internet, it's possible to learn about sustainability with ease. Reading about environmentalism and how carbon footprints impact pollution levels will give you insight into the basis of these practices.

Besides, joining local communities, online forums, and volunteering are practical ways to enter into a global conversation about a greener lifestyle, as well as building relationships with like-minded people.

By Tasneem Azim
Photo: Collected

#ARTS & CRAFTS

How D D Mollick is preserving Sultan's artistic legacy

In Narail, a short distance from the S M Sultan Museum, sits Charukuthi Shilpalo, an art school that doesn't run on tuition fees, grants, or a polished curriculum. Instead, it runs on a conviction that children in the villages deserve the same artistic and creative exposure as those in the cities.

The man behind it, D D Mollick, has been here since he returned from Dhaka after more than two decades of study, exhibitions, and work. He had trained under S M Sultan, one of Bangladesh's most iconic painters, and shown his own work both at home and abroad. But instead of settling into the capital's art circuit, Mollick chose to come back to his birthplace and teach disadvantaged children, for free!

"I've kept this completely non-profit," he says. "No fees. The point is to make them learn, not to get them into some competition or show off numbers. I'd rather have fewer students who really want to learn."

Drawing as protest

Mollick did not start drawing with the idea of becoming an artist. He says his earliest work came from anger, not against institutions, but against petty injustices in his village life.

"I grew up in a middle-class family, the eldest of my brothers. There was pressure from all sides. If something wrong happened, I couldn't fight it with a stick. I saw that if I drew something on the mud wall of our house, it would have an effect on people's minds," he recalls.

Once, when someone killed one of his pigeons, he drew a picture on the wall and wrote: 'Killing a living being is a great sin and leads to hell.' That was his way of getting his point across.

From there, his interest in figures led him on a search for better teachers. Local artists helped him improve — until one

cousin told him about an "old man in Narail" he should meet. That man was none other than S M Sultan.

The first visit was unsuccessful; they were told to return the next day. The second trip, walking 14 kilometres, brought him face-to-face with Sultan, and thus began seven years of regular visits and learning.

"Sultan portrayed humans as the source of all power. Seeing those big canvases was like holding heaven in my hands," Mollick says.

From student to seller

Art school came later. His father sold a piece of family land to fund his studies, first at Khulna Art College, then at Chittagong Art Institute and finally, an MFA in Dhaka. Like Sultan, he learned to make his own canvases, paints, and brushes, both for economic reasons and to maintain creative control.

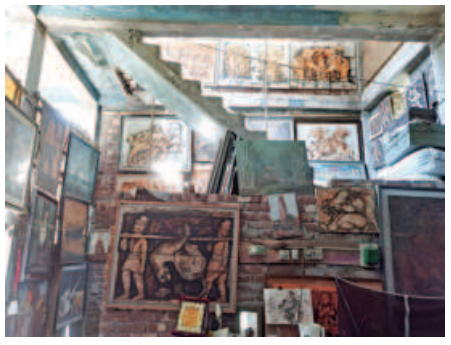
"I never submitted my CV anywhere. I lived by selling my paintings," he says. Galleries in Dhaka and hotels like Sheraton and Sonargaon displayed his work, and many pieces went abroad.

However, city life came with restrictions. He couldn't hang his paintings on the walls as he wished. Apartments changed; neighbours complained.

"There's no freedom in city life," he says. "And I saw that children in my village weren't getting opportunities. I thought — if Sultan could return home after conquering the world, why can't I?"

Returning empty-handed

When he came back to Narail, it wasn't with capital or a business plan. "I started with empty hands. No income source. Only my father's land," he says. That land still sustains him; he works the fields himself and produces crops organically.



The agricultural work is woven into his teaching. Students at Charukuthi Shilpalo don't just learn how to draw; they learn how to grow poison-free food, care for soil, and work in the sun.

"You have to eat healthy food to stay healthy. This is as important as learning to draw," Mollick says.

Classes are not tied to any government syllabus. Students begin with basic shapes, tonal work, and hand-eye coordination before moving into more complex ideas. He limits enrolment to around 50 — fewer than he could take — to focus on those genuinely interested.

He also teaches in other institutions, including a fishing village school and the S M Sultan Charu and Karukala Foundation, where he has full freedom over the curriculum.

"I'm not a magnet like Sultan; I can't make children walk 14 kilometres to my house. So, I go to them," he says.

Building beyond art

The scope of Charukuthi Shilpalo has expanded. Two United Nations officials bought him a plot of land for farming native fish and cultivating fruits and vegetables. On Saturdays, children join "Come and Learn" sessions there, tending gardens, learning about biodiversity, and seeing how agriculture and art can share a philosophy — patience, observation, and respect for materials.

Mollick's plans stretch beyond teaching. He wants to preserve disappearing tools, crafts, and occupations in his region.

"In this village, children don't know what a plough or a yoke is," he says. "The Pal community's pottery work is vanishing. Weavers, fishermen, bamboo workers — I want to have a room for each of them here. The stories of this district can't survive if no one keeps them."

Legacy

His attachment to Sultan is direct and personal. He wrote his master's thesis on his guru, and later published a book.

Mollick's own work continues, largely commission-based paintings that help sustain his school. But he's realistic about recognition. "Artists don't usually get recognition in their lifetime. I've assumed I'll spend my whole life making the tail of a whale. Maybe someone else will make the head after I'm gone."

What keeps him going is not awards or exhibitions, but the sight of children learning, planting, and carrying knowledge forward. He measures success in the number of students who will teach their friends, rather than defeat them in a competition. "People like to see results in the form of trophies or certificates," he says. "But I look at whether someone has learned something they can pass on."

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Courtesy

#WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

How Dhaka's female fitness instructors are redefining wellness

Female fitness instructors in the capital are rewriting the rules of wellness. Once sidelined in a male-dominated space, these women are now taking centre stage, blending expertise with personal passion, and inspiring others to redefine health, not as a luxury but as a necessity.

Two voices stand out in this movement: Nuran Durdana, a Certified Personal Trainer in Human Movement Science (Brookbush Institute), and Sabrina Rahman, founder of Burnout Fitness and a licensed Zumba instructor trained in Melbourne, Australia.

Their journeys reveal the scope, challenges, and potential of female-led fitness in Dhaka.

Sabrina Rahman

From personal health battles to professional empowerment

For many women entering the industry, the path begins with personal transformation.

"I had hypothyroidism," recalls Durdana. "I used to hate the gym. I hated the treadmill, I hated weights. But now, I'm a heavyweight lifter. I've built a career from what I once resisted."

Her shift from reluctance to passion became a mission, encouraging women, especially those over 30, to embrace strength training.

"If I look at body composition in Bangladesh, women have almost no muscle mass. Even those who look slim often have more fat and no muscle. We need to build muscle to stay healthy and strong," she adds.

Rahman's journey began on another continent. Living in Australia, she was balancing an IT career and raising two young children when she realised fitness had to be a priority.

"After my kids were born, I was constantly tired. I wanted the energy to play with them. That's when I thought, why not turn my passion for fitness into my profession?" She pursued a rigorous one-year Certificate III in Fitness from Melbourne's Fit College, completing part of it online during the pandemic.

Nuran Durdana

Breaking into a male-dominated industry

Both women acknowledge that Dhaka's fitness scene remains heavily male-dominated.

"There's still hesitation for women to train under male instructors," says Durdana. "If we have more well-educated, well-mannered female trainers, it will encourage more women to join gyms. Right now, you'll see 10 or 20 men for every one woman in many gyms."

Rahman agrees. "When I started, there was a lot of criticism: comments about body type, weightlifting, or even the idea of working out from home. Many felt fitness meant only going to a gym. However, during COVID-19, I showed that home workouts could work for mums, housewives, and working women who can only spare 30 minutes a day."

Shifting mindsets and building acceptance

For these instructors, one of the biggest barriers is not just infrastructure, it's perception.

"The first step is education," says Durdana. "We need social acceptance. Fitness training must be seen as a respected profession. If people start saying, 'Oh, you're a trainer — that's amazing!' more women will join."

Rahman emphasises the need to challenge ingrained beliefs.

"In our culture, mothers are often told to focus only on their children. I teach that to care for your children, you must first take care of yourself. If the mother is well, the family thrives."

Beyond the workout: Holistic wellness

Both trainers stress that fitness is not just about aesthetics.

"I want to work on real goals, real lifestyles," says Durdana. "If someone tells me their only goal is to look like a certain celebrity, I tell them to find another trainer. I focus on functional training – so you can climb stairs, carry groceries, and live independently as you age. Fitness is like eating or showering — it's part of daily life."

For Sabrina, wellness also means accessibility. Her Burnout Fitness programs were designed to help women work out from home without equipment. "Not everyone can go to a gym, but everyone deserves the chance to be fit. The mindset shift is the most important thing."

The business of female fitness in Dhaka

Fitness instruction is also a growing career path for women in the city. With the rise of boutique studios, online coaching, and specialised classes, instructors can build sustainable income streams.

"You can work part-time, freelance, or even start your own studio," says Rahman. "But training opportunities in Bangladesh are limited. Many local trainers learn from one another instead of relying on formal institutions. We need proper certification programs here."

Durdana shares a similar vision for the future. "I dream of having my own space with training, nutrition counselling, and mental health support under one roof. When I train clients, psychology is as important as physical training. People don't tell you everything on day one — you have to build trust."

Creating safe and inclusive spaces

Safety and comfort remain central issues. "Women feel more comfortable in female-led environments," says Durdana. "Studios for women, or at least more female trainers, will help break down barriers."

These spaces are not just about avoiding discomfort, they are about empowerment. "When women see other women lifting weights, running classes, or leading Zumba, it normalises strength and fitness," adds Sabrina.

A growing, health-conscious Dhaka

Both instructors see a promising future for women's fitness in the capital.

"We are slowly becoming more health-conscious," says Rahman. "When I go to the gym now, I see people genuinely working out for their health, not just to pass the time. But we still need more trainers, especially women, in everything from Zumba to Pilates."

Durdana agrees, stressing that the industry's growth depends on shifting how people think about exercise.

"In Bangladesh, fitness still means going to the gym without a clear plan. I want to change that so people see it as part of life, linked to their careers, families, and happiness," she says.

Stronger together

Female fitness instructors in Dhaka are more than just trainers; they are educators, entrepreneurs, and catalysts for change. They are proving that fitness is not just about losing weight or looking good, but about building resilience, independence, and community.

In a city where women's public roles are often scrutinised, these instructors are claiming space, not just in gyms, but in the cultural imagination of what women can do and be.

As Durdana puts it, "We need to build muscle mass, and not just in our bodies, but in our mindset as a society."

And Sabrina's words remind us of the deeper truth: "If you have a passion, do it. Criticism will always be there, but health is priceless, and helping others find it is the best reward."

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Courtesy

#LIFEHACKS

Calming the nerves: How to overcome stage fright

Increased heart rate, dry mouth, butterflies in the stomach, and a fear of failure or embarrassment…stage fright is the stuff of nightmares and for many performers, an unshakeable enemy that is hell bent on ruining everything.

I recently had a chance to take part in the Global Encounters Arts and Sports Festival in Dubai, representing Bangladesh in the Vocals category. For someone who enjoys singing, I am painfully nervous. Therefore, once I push myself to sign up for public performances, the days leading up to the actual act are pure torture.

Most performers understand the world to be a fairly judgemental place. We are perhaps more scared of embarrassing ourselves than others who work outside of the limelight. Stage fright is just that, the fear of slipping up and embarrassing ourselves in front of an audience.

It catapults the body into the fight or flight mode and while absolutely normal, the consequent physiological reactions can hamper performance. This is exactly why a perfectly well-rehearsed song can sound off tune during the main performance or why a common word will make one stutter through an entire presentation.

The good news, I have learned, is that with enough practice and preparation, this anxiety can quickly be managed, and even turned into excitement.

Practice

If there is one sure-shot way of acing a public appearance, it is practice. Knowing your material inside out can build confidence and reduce uncertainty. I spoke to some friends in Dubai and most, like me,

had simple ways to counter their anxiety.

"I practice in front of a mirror," shared Sajina Manjee, a vocalist from Dubai. "This way I can see my actions and expressions, and know which ones to keep and which to eliminate."

The young performer maintains that it reduces awkwardness and streamlines her performance to whatever is really working for her."

You can also record yourself or perform in front of friends and family. The better you know your content, the less chance you have of making mistakes on the big day.

Relaxation methods

A body in fight or flight mode will sweat more, tremble more and result in a sandy mouth. Practising deep breathing helps detangle those nerves, and mindfulness meditation can also help in reducing physical tension and promoting mental clarity.

Farhad Shami, a 17-year-old hip hop dancer from Malaysia, warned, however, that while these techniques can help with stage fright, they must be practised ahead of time. "It isn't something you hurriedly do, an hour before you go on stage."

Mental Preparation

For someone with acute anxiety, having to perform before an audience of twenty thousand may seem like an insurmountable challenge. People have managed to do this, however, with gradual exposure.

A dancer from Lisbon, Nurina Pirani says she volunteered to perform in front of smaller, less intimidating audiences, even if it gave her jitters. "Temporary discomfort can quickly turn into positive adrenaline, and it helps you ride out those few, crucial minutes of performance time."

Once you are used to seeing a sea of expectant faces in front of you, and hearing the applause, of course, the next step is to hold on to that warm feeling of euphoria. Visualise the encores before you go on stage and remind yourself that you are in that space because someone thought you were capable enough to be there.

Pep Talks

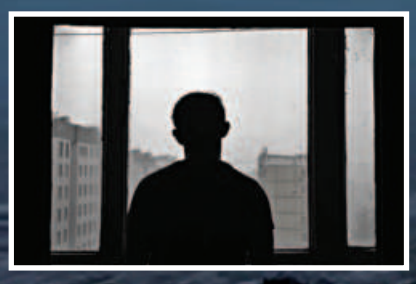
It is important to reframe negative thoughts. I have done this myself, and I can vouch for it. Each time I caught myself thinking anxious thoughts like, "I will mess up and embarrass myself", I quickly reminded myself of my hours of relentless practice and how well I knew my stuff.

Focus on positive affirmations such as "I am prepared" and "I am capable."

Remember that no one in the audience knows your performance, so mistakes are bound to go largely unnoticed. Be your own coach and tell yourself that you are in the best position to excel, at the peak of your practice and that it is only a few minutes to get through before that overwhelming, earth-shattering applause is yours.

By Munira Fidai
Photo: Collected

Post-travel depression is real – here's how to cope



How many of us have felt sadness, emptiness, or anxiety that we were unable to describe, after returning from a trip? Well, you're not alone because travel depression is real and it can stay on like an unwelcome guest long after we come back and get back into the grind. So, what is travel depression and why does it hit? Almost always, travel is associated with excitement, adventure, and relaxation. We spend weeks, maybe months saving up for our trip and then an equal amount of time day dreaming about it. And then, once that trip is completed, we suddenly realise, it's over.

The day dreams have been lived out, and there is nothing else as much fun to look forward to, at least in the immediate future. Our days preceding the trip had revolved so much around it that reality seems lacklustre in comparison.

While not officially recognised as a clinical disorder, travel depression is a real emotional response characterised by symptoms such as fatigue, irritability, difficulty concentrating, sadness, and loss of interest in daily activities.

The real concern? While a good number of people naturally readjust in a few days, others can hold on to the pain for a lot longer.

We agree, returning to familiar obligations, work pressures, and monotonous routines can be tough and can lead to considerable emotional distress. If you wish to be kind to yourself, allow yourself time to process these emotions. Talk about them with friends, bask in the memories and begin using those holiday goodies you've picked up during your time there.

Next, try to establish routine as much as, and as early as possible. This, in no way, means that you ignore your emotions; simply channel them the right way.

A major contributing aspect of travel blues is the high expectations associated with travel itself. Many people envision their trips as perfect escapes, full of joy and adventure. When reality falls short of these idealised visions, it can lead to disappointment.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 11

GOLD AND BENGALI WOMEN

A timeless love affair

Photo: Adnan Rahman
Model: Era
Fashion Direction & Styling: Soniya Yeasmin Isha
Jewellery: 6 Yards Story
Makeup: Sumon Rahat
Hair: Sheuly

We South Asians are an interesting lot. We love to feast, love to celebrate life, and all things glittery tug at the strings of our hearts! To that end we love gold jewellery ardently and earnestly in all its glory, shape, and form. It's impossible to resist the temptation of gold and wars have waged and blood has been shed in pursuit of it. When a baby is born, we adorn him or her with gold jewellery, a symbol of utmost love and affection. Our weddings are unimaginable without the signature glint and sparkle. Mothers start collecting trousseau for their beloved daughters from an early age and gold ornaments are always given high priority.

It is not merely decorative, but is considered as a safety net for the daughter she dotes upon, that she can rely upon in a moment of crisis. Always holding good value gold accessories is never a bad investment especially in today's economic climate where some financial crisis or the other keeps on arising.

Bengal's relationship with gold is a tale extraordinaire, intertwined with colonial influences, trade, culture, politics and tradition. Dating back to first century AD the Kushana empire introduced the earliest recorded evidence of gold and its usage was predominantly coinage. Gold was used as a major form of currency among the traders, and even though Bengal was not a part of the Kushana empire it still reached its shores via trading.

Historians have unearthed evidence that owing to Bengal's maritime history and rich trade relations with Macedonia, Crete and other parts of the Mediterranean region gold was used as a major form of currency among traders and merchants. Aside from coinage various artifacts made with gold also reached Bengal shores from far and wide, creating a uniquely rich history of gold's significance in this area.

As trade facilitated and flourished gold kept flowing steadily in Bengal. So even though Bengal didn't produce gold it had a considerable flow of gold in many forms through rich and prosperous trade networks.

With Hinduism and Buddhism flourishing in these regions, gold was used for religious purposes and rituals elevating its status greatly.

That gold compliments our dusky skin beautifully is perhaps the greatest reason why this metal is favoured by women of Bengal so much!

'Gold bangle on a golden arm' is an adage made popular by poets who attribute gold jewellery enhancing Bengali women's lovely rich skin even further. Our weddings are strongly rooted in traditions and customs steeped with Bengali heritage, and gold has played a major role in it since time immemorial. There was a period of time in between when gold ornaments were considered outdated and irrelevant but nowadays traditional designs are appreciated greatly by modern women. They proudly wear and flaunt heirloom accessories belonging to their mothers and grandmothers, bringing forward their family's traditions, priceless emotions and memories such ornaments hold and evoke.

Honouring their family's heritage and legacy heirloom, jewellery is a great reminder that a thing of beauty is indeed a joy forever. Aside from weddings heirloom, gold ornaments are reimagined by women nowadays and worn with great style and élan. Pairing a chic jumpsuit with one's grandmother's gold cuff or choker is a great style statement, while also upholding one's own identity.

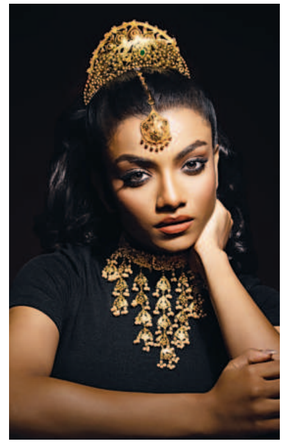
Gold is a forever muse to designers everywhere and its timeless beauty and appeal endures rampant trends and changes. Its versatility makes it a great foil for experimentation. Edgy, cutting-edge designs play out really nicely with gold, and precious gemstones add to that mix. Imagine a gold lariat necklace with emeralds, perfect for your next night out in town, or a pair of ear cuffs with cabochon sapphire, a splendid statement piece perfect for a cocktail party.

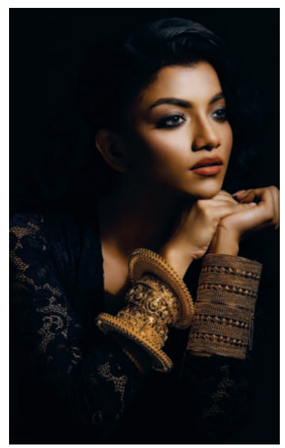
If you are on the lookout for gold jewellery, make sure you purchase from a trusted retailer and is reputable. There are many different carat weights so pick one in your price range.

Buying gold is surely an investment as well as an object of affection so do your research and take your time before making decisions.

So, it is time to go bold, and do it with gold!

By Sabrina N Bhuiyan





#FOOD & RECIPES

Craving good street food? Head to Mohammadpur now!

Did you know that scientists have found the sound of sizzling beef to be one of the most gratifying sounds, irresistible to the human senses? That sizzle as beef touches the surface of hot oil in the pan, combined with the smoky aroma of coil-cooked shashlik, creates a sensory experience that's nearly impossible to resist. However, Mohammadpur offers much more than just that. This place offers a little something for people with all kinds of taste buds — whether they have a sweet tooth or a craving for spices.

Walking down the alleys here, the sizzling sound of "chaap" frying, mingled with the irresistible aroma, tempts you to abandon any diet plans for just one indulgent evening. Whether you are a local or an explorer, it is difficult to ignore your

cravings when you are walking by the streets of Mohammadpur.

Following are a few street food recommendations where you can take your friends and family, allowing you to earn extra credit in the friend circle for picking a hangout spot as iconic as Mohammadpur.

Munna Mama Haleem, Salimullah Road
As you step onto Salimullah Road, the first aroma that tickles your appetite is Munna Mama's Haleem — nestled right in Mohammadpur's most popular eateries' hub. You might confuse it with Mona Mama Haleem, located just across the street, but we did not include that in our top picks.

The kind of competition you see among food carts here is usually good for the customers, as the vendors work hard to make the food even tastier.

Haleem stall here dominates the street food hub, thanks to its rich ethnic spices and flavours.

Garnished with a hint of tamarind pickle, fried onions (piyaj beresta), and accompanied by luchis, a boiled quail egg, and beef, the haleem here is sure to satisfy your piquant whim.

If you are a spice aficionado, you should definitely try the haleem priced at Tk 100, best enjoyed with luchis at Tk 5 apiece.

Selim Kabab Ghar, Salimullah Road
Beef chaaps sizzling in hot oil fill the air around Selim Kabab Ghar on Salimullah Road with a mouth-watering aroma. This more-than-50-year-old shop is a true Mohammadpur favourite, always packed with locals. Founded by Selim, the place is now run by his son, Yakub, who proudly keeps the tradition alive.

"Chaaps are the most sold item here," says Jamil, a chef who has been working there for almost 20 years. And it makes sense — for just Tk 130, you get beef chaap that's simple, flavourful, and loved by everyone. Your taste bud is not confused on this one; you are sure that it's delicious. No fancy recipes, just that perfect street-side taste that never disappoints. And if you are up for something different, try their brain fry, an underrated item, also priced at Tk 130.

Khandani Tea, Salimullah Road
After having satisfied your taste buds with haleem and chaap, your culinary adventure doesn't end here. If you mention the name "Khandani Tea" to the locals, they will point you toward the famous cart just a few steps away.

Whether it be afternoon or evening, you will most certainly find a crowd gathered there for its famous motka chaa, more commonly known as "khandani tea".

It is a special tea recipe made with three different kinds of milk and garnished with slices of nuts and almonds, making it a perfect dessert after a spicy meal.

You could even try the makhon malai tea, topped with a rich blend of butter and malai. This tea serves as the perfect sweet finale to a spicy meal, soothing your taste buds and preparing you for more exploration. You can enjoy khandani tea for Tk 35 and makhon malai tea for Tk 70.

Chitoi Pitha Cart, Near Suchona Community Centre
You might think chitoi pitha is just a winter treat, but not in Mohammadpur! The chitoi pitha cart right beside the Suchona Community Centre is always crowded, no matter the season. Enamul, the man behind the magic, made it possible, turning this winter special into an all-season favourite.

However, it's not just the pitha. It's the 25 or more sides that make people come back again and again. From spicy alur dom, shutki bhorta, dhanepata bhorta, mustard and garlic bhorta to tangy pickles of plum, mango, and tamarind — the choices are endless.

But the star of our show is the badam bhorta — creamy and crunchy at the same time, a perfect combo with the pitha. Each pitha is just Tk 10, and you can pair it with as many sides as you like.

Handling such a crowd is no joke, but Enam bhai is the hero here, flipping 10 pithas at once like it's nothing. And if you want to level up your treat, try the egg chitoi, priced at Tk 30 — soft, fluffy, and feels like the premium version of the basic one, though opinions on that might differ.

Shahi Doi Fuchka, Sidewalk of Tokyo Square
Fuchka or doi fuchka might be the favourites at Shahi Doi Fuchka, but wait till you meet its oversized, flavour-packed relative: raj kachori. It's a large crispy shell stuffed with ghugni, sour curd, cashew nuts, chanachur, tomato sauce, chutney and raisins. The thing is a flavour explosion that will leave you wondering, "What did I just eat?" (in a good way, obviously!).

At Tk 150, some might say it's a bit overpriced, but honestly, it's huge and can easily be shared by two.

The shop opens at 4 PM and serves till 11 PM. If the Raj Kachori feels a bit too fancy, go for their regular fuchka or doi fuchka — both are good choices as well.

Nawshad Soup, Salimullah Road
Situated at the centre of Salimullah Road's eateries' hub, you will always find a thick crowd forming a queue just to get a seat at this old-looking stall.

Embodying a street food interior, this stall has a rustic setup — with just a stew pot that needs stirring every minute and a few stools and benches inside. Its modest look actually has an interesting story behind it.

Legend has it that 25 years ago, Nawshad, a local entrepreneur, started this stall back when he was in class 7, with his exclusive and single recipe: chicken soup. The rest is history. Chicken soup, the only item on their menu, is priced at Tk 60, making it a go-to place for locals.

With tender slices of chicken, green naga chilli sauce, rock salt and vinegar, served alongside crispy luchis, this thick soup fills your mouth with a perfect balance of tangy heat and spicy flavour.

Singapore Juice & Coffee House, Town Hall Bus Stop
Located in the busy Town Hall Bus Stop of Mohammadpur, this place is always crowded. People often come here with their family and friends.

Frustrated with the traffic, even commuters often step out of their cars or buses just to grab a refreshing glass of chilled seasonal fruit juice or milkshake from Mohammadpur's famous Singapore Juice Corner.

With more than 60 delectable options of beverages on their menu, our special recommendation would be the mango lassi, faluda, and cashew nut milkshake. The rich blend of milk and fruits makes these items must-try street food on our list.

Among the seasonal fruit juices, we highly recommend the blackberry, sugarcane, and raw mango juices for their refreshing flavours. Whether you're in the mood for something tangy, sweet, or even a little spicy, this stall has something for every palate and mood.

Hot Momo Fiesta, Nurjahan Road
Last but definitely not least, we have the chicken cheese momo from Hot Momo Fiesta. Momo may have started its journey in Tibet or Nepal, but now it's winning hearts right here in Dhaka.

Nurjahan Road is packed with momo carts these days, but Hot Momo Fiesta is our top pick. This cart has held its spot for five years, and the crowd that gathers around it every evening says it all.

According to Zakir, one of the employees there, chicken momo is their top seller. The item is soft, juicy, and full of flavour. But the cheese version? That's a massive upgrade. The cheese pull is satisfyingly stretchy, and every bite is pure perfection.

By Minhazur Rahman Alvee & Jawwad Sami Neogi
Photo: Jawwad Sami Neogi

#TRENDS

How Dhaka's "Struggler Sayem" became an unexpected social media star

In a world where the social media scroll often feels like a blur of dance trends, polished travel vlogs, and heavily edited lives, a green CNG-run auto rickshaw in Dhaka carries something far rarer.

Behind its wheel is Sayem Ahmed, better known online as "Struggler Sayem," a CNG driver who shares his life not through filters or flash, but with quiet honesty and fluent self-taught English. In Bangladesh's crowded digital landscape, his presence feels like a calm pause, just like a moment to breathe and reflect.

Sayem does not shout to be heard. He does not need to. His gentle, thoughtful, sometimes tired voice carries stories that resonate deeply with thousands. His daily TikToks and Facebook posts offer no special effects nor any exaggerated reactions. Yet, his viewers keep coming back. And they stay.

The rise of an unlikely content creator

Sayem Ahmed began sharing his life on social media with one simple idea: to learn English.

While describing his motivation behind creating videos, he said, "Actually, I've been very eager to learn the language since my childhood. But as I couldn't continue my education, learning it in a formal way was impossible for me. On top of that, I neither had the opportunity nor the ability to enroll in any English courses. So, I thought — what if I create videos? That way, I'd get two benefits from one effort. First, I'd be creating content, and second, I'd be practicing English at the same time. And that's how my content creation journey began."

And so, he did.

His early content was humble; narrating his day, and simply sharing a peaceful moment driving his rented green CNG through Dhaka's chaotic streets. But what caught people's attention was not just the language but his tone, which is warm, respectful, and entirely free of ego.

He chose the username "Struggler Sayem" not as a gimmick, but as a reflection of reality.

"Since I've been struggling through life from my childhood, that's why I call myself a "Struggler"", he said.

The simplicity is what sticks. His videos are not crafted to go viral. They are crafted to be real. His audience, mostly young, working-class Bangladeshis, often comment that his posts feel like home.

Branching out in content creation

Sayem uses both Facebook and TikTok for sharing his contents with the handle "Struggler Sayem."

When asked whether he prefers TikTok or Facebook, he shared, "I use Facebook more than any other social media platform. But I would prefer TikTok here, because it's easier to gain popularity quickly on TikTok."

While it is not the kind of social media strategy one would hear from a corporate-trained influencer, this response reflects his own journey, where he is figuring things out as he goes.

Sayem Ahmed's storytelling is not just limited to his daily life or reflections. In recent months, he posted a video addressing extortion.

Regarding that awareness video against extortion, he said, "I really want to post videos, but I don't know if I'll be able to keep doing it in the future. Because in our country, speaking out against injustice is treated like a crime, like a curse. And right now, I'm the only man in my family. I think smart people will understand what I mean."

The comfort of realness

In an online culture where authenticity is often crafted rather than lived, Sayem Ahmed does not pretend. A short clip of him laughing with his sister, cooking rice on a single burner, or sharing a moment of quiet reflection in his CNG has the power to linger long after you scroll past.

He often films with no tripod, no lighting, and no script. But what emerges is not amateurish, but rather artful in its honesty. And in a time of curated perfection, there is something deeply comforting in watching someone who simply lives, and lets you witness it.

For young people navigating economic hardship, family responsibilities, or personal insecurities, Sayem is a reminder that you do not have to be loud to be heard, respected, and loved.

He has no final message for now.

"No, thanks," he replied when asked if he would like to add anything. And maybe that is part of the magic as he is not here to preach or teach. He is just here. Steady behind the wheel of his green CNG, speaking softly, driving forward.

By Md Zahidur Rabbi
Photo: Courtesy

#PERSPECTIVE

Is your side hustle making you RICH OR JUST TIRED?

Not too long ago, "doing what you love" was the ultimate dream. We were told that our passions could pay the bills, that 9-to-5 jobs were soul-crushing, and that financial freedom lay in turning hobbies into income streams. Baking, painting, editing, writing, reselling thrifted clothes or importing designer ones, designing mugs and t-shirts! Suddenly, everything had the potential to become a 'brand'. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and, of course, Facebook gave us the tools to do it.

But in this culture of creativity-turned-commodity, something quietly started slipping away. What began as liberation slowly morphed into more work, and we barely noticed. The lines blurred. Our side hustles stopped being about passion and started looking suspiciously like second jobs.

Somewhere along the way, the thing that once brought us peace now became another reason for missing out on sleep.

The appeal of side hustles makes sense. In an economy where living costs are rising and traditional jobs often offer little flexibility or satisfaction, having a second income stream feels smart. Plus, there's the seductive idea that if we hustle hard enough now, we will earn ourselves a cushy, passive-income future.

It also does not help that everywhere we look someone seems to be doing it better. The friend who grew her candle business to 10k followers? The coworker with a viral food blog! The cousin who turned weekend photography into wedding bookings.

Their glow-ups are documented in curated reels, motivational captions and aesthetic packaging shots. We genuinely cheer for them and somewhere along the way, can't help but quietly wonder if we are falling behind.

And so, we get pulled in, too. We stay up late editing, calculating prices, managing orders, and answering DMs. We post when we are supposed to. We read content strategies and chase algorithms. All while juggling full-time jobs, families, and social obligations.

We are still dreaming, yes. But at what cost?

The reality behind the hustle isn't always as glossy as the feed. For every success story, there are countless others burning out in silence. Passion becomes pressure. Every quiet evening feels like a missed opportunity to be 'productive'. Guilt creeps in when we choose rest over reels.

People do not always talk about the cost; the back pain from packing orders on the floor, the emotional fatigue of customer queries at midnight, the money invested in packaging that might never be recouped, the anxiety when posts don't perform.

The emotional toll is real, too. When something we once loved becomes transactional, it's hard to feel joy in doing it anymore.

You might start dreading your art, resenting your customers, questioning your worth. Not because you failed, but because you were running two races at once without realising it.

Why is it so hard to pause then? Because capitalism does not like pauses. It tells us that every hour should be optimised, every skill monetised. If you enjoy something, there must be a way to make money from it. Otherwise, what's the point of even having a hobby, right?

This generation is deeply creative, ambitious, and resourceful. It's a beautiful thing. However, we also need room to be just creative, without turning every painting into a product or every poem into a post. We need time to breathe without strategising it. Joy without a hashtag.

Rest is not laziness. And it is high time we realise that.

It's okay to want to earn more. It's okay to dream of building something outside your 9-to-5. But maybe it's okay to slow down as well? To separate passion from performance. To remind ourselves that not every interest has to be a business plan.

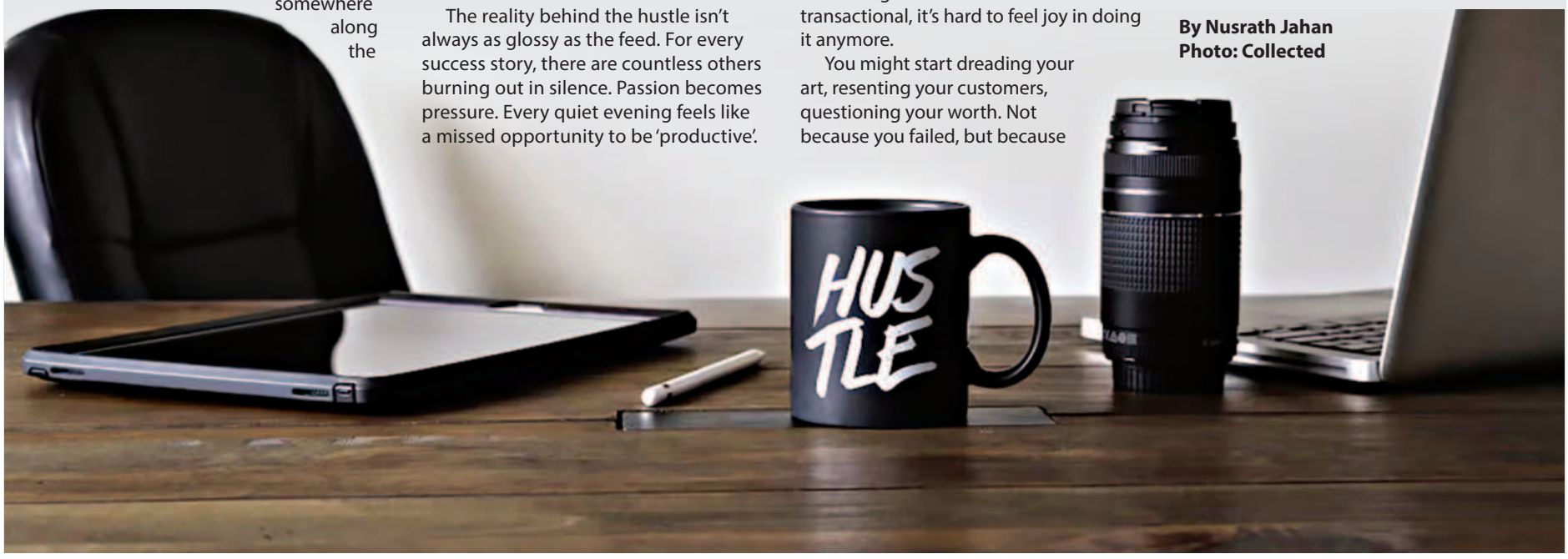
If your side hustle genuinely lights you up, that's beautiful. But if it's draining you, if you're constantly overwhelmed, maybe it's time to reassess. Is this still what you wanted? Or has the pressure to 'make it work' overshadowed why you started?

It's not failure to step back. It's not quitting to want peace.

You're allowed to just bake without selling, paint without posting, and create without explaining.

Because you are not a brand. You're a person. And maybe, just maybe, the best thing we can do for ourselves is not another hustle. It's giving ourselves permission to pause. Even if just for a little while.

By Nusrath Jahan
Photo: Collected



Post-travel depression is real – here's how to cope

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 05

Engaging in physical activity and practicing self-care is a strategy that is similar to planning for a trip financially. Setting small, achievable goals such as these can help one channel their emotions in a better direction, giving one the opportunity to look forward to new things.

By Munira Fidai
Photo: Collected

HOROSCOPE

ARIES
(MAR. 21-APR. 20)

Romance and social activity will be a promising combination. Be cautious while travelling. Avoid parting with cash unless benefits are clear. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

TAURUS
(APR. 21-MAY 21)

Organise yourself well at work for productivity. Beautify surroundings through renovations. Weigh pros and cons to make a life-changing decision. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

GEMINI
(MAY 22-JUN. 21)

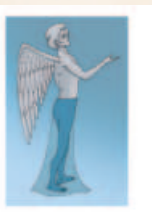
Schedule time for loved ones. Fitness programs will boost self-esteem. Your talents will shine at work. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

CANCER
(JUN. 22-JUL. 22)

Your honesty will earn respect. Spend time on yourself. Romance may occur if you travel. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

LEO
(JUL. 23-AUG. 22)

Changes in your home will be positive. Take care of minor ailments. Involvement with children will be rewarding. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



VIRGO
(AUG. 23-SEP. 23)

Double-check before going out. Fitness club involvement may spark romance. Exciting trips are likely. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

LIBRA
(SEP. 24-OCT. 23)

Avoid living for others. Steer clear of getting close to coworkers. Channel energy into home-enhancing projects. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

SCORPIO
(OCT. 24-NOV. 21)

Your partner may blame you. Passion is the best way to relieve tension. Avoid impatience with slackers. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

SAGITTARIUS
(NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

Deception may surround friends and relatives. Be creative in your pursuits. Avoid blaming others for stubbornness. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

CAPRICORN
(DEC. 22-JAN. 20)

Your partner may already know the circumstances. Attend enlightening lectures or seminars. Pamper yourself for a change. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

AQUARIUS
(JAN. 21-FEB. 19)

Schedule toning, fitness, and pampering. Friends and relatives can give solid advice. Get out and have fun. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

PISCES
(FEB. 20-MAR. 20)

Set priorities straight. Take action to reach potential. Avoid revenge; they'll expose themselves. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

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Six yards of verse: The bridal saree inspired by BANALATA SEN

She was never solely confined to the yellowing pages of a poetry anthology. Ever since its publication, Banalata Sen stepped out from Jibanananda Das's verses to claim her place in every Bengali's heart. Her presence now lingers beyond the quiet gatherings of literature enthusiasts, and lives in the imagination of lovers and dreamers.

In the 1990s, sarees first began to be treated as artists' canvases, where poetry and calligraphy were fused to create magic in wearable form. At first, the idea was novel. However, over the years the concept took root and soon became the perfect garb for soirees, literary gatherings, and poetry recitals.

Gradually, visual poetry woven and painted onto fabric began to step into more glamorous arenas. No saree exhibition or fashion runway today feels complete without these bold, contemporary style statements.

In the latest design of Afsana Ferdousi, the immortal words of Banalata Sen find an unexpected new canvas: the folds of wedding couture. Ferdousi is celebrated for blending sustainability with a seamless fusion of modernity and tradition, and has reimagined Banalata Sen on the six-yard drape. This time, at the special request of a bride-to-be.

In the poem, Jibanananda Das uses the image of a weary, long-travelled sailor as a central metaphor. The narrator describes himself as having wandered through the seas for "a thousand years," crossing ancient oceans and lands — from the "darkness of Ceylon" to "the seas of Malaya" — before finding peace in the quiet gaze of Banalata Sen.

In Ferdousi's hands, the saree's zamin and anchal become the sailor's final destination. The central motif of the poem is brought to life as the wanderer's quest meets the artist's muse.

Alongside her painted figure, fragments of Jibanananda Das's verse flow across the fabric. With its hand-painted anchal, flowing calligraphy, and meticulous detailing, Ferdousi's creation elevates the bridal saree into a work of art. The bridal wear is a testament to the designer's ability to blend heritage with contemporary designs, crafting a piece that speaks as much of personal style as it does of timeless tradition.

LS Desk
Photography : Reminiscence Photography
Bride: Ariana Haque
Wardrobe by Designer Afsana Ferdousi