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DRIVEN by Style

PHOTO: ADNAN RAHMAN ◆ MODEL: RUPOM ◆ FASHION DIRECTION & STYLING: SONIA YEASMIN ISHA ◆ WARDROBE: GENTLEMAN'S WARDROBE (GW)
MAKEUP: NOYON ◆ LOCATION: AMARI DHAKA

#ARCHITECTURE

Design that respects nature: Inside Albion Art Gallery

The plot was nothing special; a patch of sandy ground in front of a tired 90s building in Uttara. A garage, a storage room, a 4x4 bathroom, and some plants left to fend for themselves. Two half-dead trees — one jackfruit, one neem — stood quietly at the edge of being forgotten.

But for architect S M Ehsan Uz Zaman, it wasn't just a leftover site. It was memory, erosion, resistance — and eventually, the foundation for what he calls "The Story of a Tree."

He convinced his client to work around the land, not over it. And that's how the Albion Art Gallery came to be — not as a sleek intervention, but as a story about not erasing what was already there.

Zaman's client, Mahmood Ullah, had a clear ask; an outdoor coffee bar with seating, an exhibition space inside the old garage, and rooftop dining. Trees and ground cover were viewed as obstacles.

But when Zaman looked at the site, he didn't see "undeveloped space." He saw something worth preserving. "It reminded me of Geoffrey Bawa's philosophy," he says. "If you can keep the tree, that's the success of the design."

So, he kept them.

The coffee bar became a smaller coffee station to avoid harming the neem tree. The garage was retrofitted as an indoor gallery with a transparent glass partition, allowing the wild outdoors to bleed into the curated inside. Bamboo and timber were used — materials with a low carbon footprint — so nothing looked like it was trying too hard.

Zaman didn't clear the land. He added to it. Not to make a statement, but to make the space feel alive without dominating it.

The neem tree was in bad shape. The soil was sandy, eroded, and barely holding together. The logical step would have been to cut it down.

Zaman disagreed. He improved the soil with composting and mulching. It took time. It wasn't flashy. But the tree stayed.

That one decision meant giving up a few seats in the café plan. But Zaman frames it differently: "It's a design choice that asks a question — Was saving a neem tree worth sacrificing three café seats?"

Convincing a client to abandon convenience is no easy sell. Zaman pitched it not as an eco-friendly stunt, but as a quality-of-space decision.

"When I said saving the trees would improve the experience of being there, the client came around," he says. "It wasn't about guilt or carbon offsets. It was about atmosphere."

Zaman doesn't claim Albion Art Gallery is a model for sustainable design. If anything, he's sceptical of how loosely the word is used.

"I don't think this project is a showcase for green architecture," he says. "But maybe it starts a conversation."

He's critical of how the industry handles ecology. "As architects, we say we care. But we keep letting trees fall. We put a few planters on balconies and call it sustainability. We cool our buildings with air conditioning instead of shade."

Zaman's firm, Ehsan Uz Zaman and Associates, takes on all kinds of work — residential, public, and private. But he's most drawn to commercial spaces like cafes and galleries, where design can shape behaviour and not just aesthetics.

Asked if he'd host student workshops or open the space up for learning, he's unsure. "I don't know if this project qualifies as an example," he says. "But maybe it's enough to get people asking better questions."

Albion Art Gallery isn't perfect. It isn't cutting-edge. And that's the point.

It's a quiet project. One where a counter got smaller so a tree could live. One where an architect didn't try to impress anyone — he just refused to erase what was already there.

Zaman didn't build for the portfolio. He built for the space. That's the story. And that's enough.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Courtesy

#RELATIONSHIPS & FAMILIES

Parenting a Child Around a Bully

Ever heard of the saying, "We are what happened to us?" Young children are a product of their surroundings. Families, friends, and the outer community all play a role in raising children, making it the proverbial village.

Children imitate what they see. Their behaviour can best be linked to the phrase — Monkey see, monkey do. Over the last few years, instances of bullying have been rising, and most often, as a result of what children see happening in their homes and their immediate surroundings. This is why, it has become all the more important for parents to model, rather than preach, ethical behaviour to their children.

For those who are at the receiving end of this behaviour, things can be a little challenging. Bullying can have serious psychological impacts on children, including feelings of fear, low self-esteem, and anxiety. While older children can generally hold their own, younger ones feel conflicted when standing their ground. On the one hand, parents teach them not to hurt anyone, and on the other, they are expected to defend themselves against their tormentors.

"Mumma, why does my older cousin not play with me? You make me share everything with him!" Such complains are the norm for stay-at-home mother, Mahima Iftekhar. She feels conflicted too, torn between imparting lessons of generosity to her son, while watching him get used shamelessly by his cousin.

Being able to tackle bullies is vital to fostering a safe, respectful, and supportive environment for their emotional and social development. Therefore, empowering children with effective strategies and

emotional resilience is essential.

Understanding Bullying and Its Impact

Before attempting to counsel children, it's important that they understand what bullying is. Young children often see bullies as friends and start admiring or trying to please them. It is vital, therefore, that explanations are tailored to their developmental level, stressing that bullying means repeated hurtful behaviour intended to cause intentional harm or discomfort to themselves or others.

Recognising that the actions of the bully do not define their worth helps children to separate their self-esteem from the other people's actions.

Building Self-Confidence and Self-Esteem

A child's personality is multi-faceted. Encourage children to identify their strengths, talents, and positive qualities to bolster their self-esteem. Celebrate their small successes to reinforce the idea that they are loved and valued. When children feel good about themselves, they are less likely to feel daunted by bullies.

Teaching Assertiveness Skills

Assertiveness is key in countering bullying. Children should be encouraged to speak up in a firm, clear, and respectful manner.

"Assertiveness is a life skill," shares Sara Mehzabeen, student counsellor at a prominent school in Dhaka. "Teach children how to phrase conversations in negative situations positively, and logically. This will ensure that they don't come across as either pushovers or culprits."

Role-playing scenarios can be a good way for children to practice saying "No," maintaining eye contact, and using assertive body language. Parents can easily include these role-plays in their daily list of activities, helping children feel prepared and less anxious about confrontations with bullies.

Equipping Children with Coping Strategies

Standing up to bullies is important, but children must also be made aware of the importance of their own safety. Very young children should be taught alternative coping strategies, such as walking away from the situation, informing or seeking help from a trusted adult, and/or staying with another group of friends.

"Involve them in extracurricular activities," advises Sarah Priscilla Ali, from the same school. "Allow the child to have another set of friends where s/he feels safe and wanted, so they do not feel completely isolated."

Encouraging Open Communication

Parents should create an environment where children feel safe to express their feelings and share incidents of bullying without fear of judgment or blame. Active listening and reassuring children that they are not at fault can significantly reduce their emotional distress, and keep them coming back to you as their safe space in the future. "Have that channel of validation flowing," recommends Sara. "And reinforce this with lots of hugs and affection."

By Munira Fidai
Photo: Collected

#FASHION & BEAUTY

Flaunting Basic Colours: Looks that Command Attention

Black, white, beige, bold solid colours and grey remain unbeatable staples when building a wardrobe of traditionals. Black and grey, as always, carry undeniable power with their sharpness, and commanding stance. White and beige, on the other hand, bring their own clarity and sophistication. Earthier shades like deep maroon, olive green, and brown are all about warmth and individuality. The strength of these traditional fits is how effortlessly they shift between roles.

There are few pieces in a man's wardrobe as effortlessly commanding as a well-fitted kurta, prince coat or a panjabi. Not bound to fleeting trends, these garments carry a confidence that doesn't need embellishment.

These classics are not limited to festivals or formal occasions. They have the power to transition from casual daily wear to statement attire with only a few subtle changes.

For formal occasions, pair a solid kurta with churidar or pyjama bottoms in matching or contrasting tones. A sharply tailored waistcoat — in velvet, silk, or even jacquard — elevates the look instantly, creating a silhouette that feels regal yet modern. Add polished leather sandals or loafers, and the result is formal wear that doesn't rely on the rigidity of suits yet carries equal presence.

For casual settings, the formula softens. A panjabi worn with slim trousers or even jeans give a laid-back yet refined look, particularly in shades of grey, olive, or white. Roll up the sleeves and keep the button open at the top for relaxed evenings out.

Beyond colour, the season often dictates how a traditionals should look and feel. Summer calls for lighter shades and breathable fabrics like linen or fine cotton, keeping the silhouette airy while projecting sophistication in the heat. Monsoon evenings, on the other hand, are a chance to lean into deeper tones — navy, maroon, charcoal, or bottle green — that hold their shape against humidity. As winter settles in, the same piece transforms when paired with richer textiles— raw silk for depth, khadi for texture, or even a wool-blend shawl draped over the shoulders to add drama and warmth.

Tone-on-tone embroidery — whether on the collar, chest, or sleeves — adds depth without distraction. The elegance of these self-patterned designs is that they catch the light only when noticed, creating an effect that is as refined as it is understated.

Accessories for men's traditional wear demand restraint, but when chosen carefully, they complete the look. A watch is the first and most important addition. For casual, go for a clean leather strap watch in black or brown. For a more formal setup, let a metal strap bring in that subtle edge. Rings, if worn, should be simple and minimal — one statement piece rather than excess.

Sunglasses can complement a daytime kurta just as effectively as they would a casual shirt.

Shoes remain the anchor. For formal wear, polished leather sandals or loafers maintain a traditional yet modern balance. For more casual fits, suede loafers, or even well-structured sandals work seamlessly. Avoid overcomplicating — the simpler the shoe, the stronger the overall impression.

The fashion landscape of menswear has always been understated, built less on flamboyance and more on quiet authority. Unlike women's fashion, which often celebrates drama and variety, men's style finds its power in subtlety — cuts that fit just right, fabrics that speak of quality, and colours that never shout, but still command attention.

This understated nature doesn't mean limited possibilities; rather, it thrives on refinement, where the smallest detail — an embroidered cuff, a perfectly tailored hem, or the choice of footwear — can elevate an entire look. In South Asian tradition, particularly, the kurta and panjabi embody this philosophy, allowing men to express sophistication without compromising simplicity.

What makes this style timeless is that it does not belong to one generation. From the youth, looking for easy sophistication, to older men seeking comfort with dignity, the traditional fits cut across age and occasion.

And that is where their real power lies. A man who wears a kurta or panjabi well is wearing confidence. He is choosing ease without sacrificing presence, and simplicity without compromising elegance. In a world of fast fashion and trend chases, these pieces are reminders that true style is not about excess.

By Nusrath Jahan
Photo: Adnan Rahman
Model: Ashraf
Fashion Direction & Styling: Sonia Yeasmin Isha
Wardrobe: Gentleman's Wardrobe (GW)
Makeup: Noyon
Location: Amari Dhaka

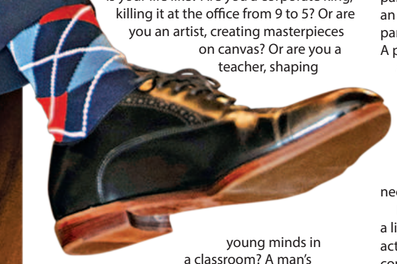
MODERN MAN
Dapper and Dashing!

A well-dressed man turns heads for more reasons than one. First, it has been statistically proven that those men who take the effort to put forward a good appearance tend to be more successful than those who don't. Also, as a matter of discipline, well-groomed men generally are more likely to exhibit similar levels of sincerity towards their profession and life in general. Plus, a well-dressed man being an eye candy for all doesn't hurt either!

Star LIFE Style

There was a time when men being conscious of their appearance was considered a taboo; the 'macho man' of yore would never bother himself with trivial matters like looks! Scruffy, days old stubble and crumpled clothes wouldn't bother him, as he would dismiss grooming as a feminine pursuit. But the modern man is an all-rounder. He values grooming, as it makes him come across as dependable and trustworthy, not to mention desirable too!

To begin with, let's talk basics. Finding one's personal style is the primary building block of a great wardrobe. What is your life like? Are you a corporate king, killing it at the office from 9 to 5? Or are you an artist, creating masterpieces on canvas? Or are you a teacher, shaping young minds in a classroom? A man's personal style is influenced by his work to a large extent, simply because if one is not comfortable in their clothes, it totally defeats the purpose, and finding it is essential to appear suave and stylish!



Fit is of paramount importance. Any outfit, casual or formal must be the right fit for the person wearing it. Understanding one's body type is the next step. For men with skinny builds, fitted styles are generally flattering. For taller, broad-shouldered gents, classic fits with streamlined shoulders are key to not appear too boxy or large. Zaftig silhouetted men should get their clothes tailored for the best possible fit, as ready to wear clothes may not always be the best choice. Men with dad bods (pot bellies) should also opt for custom tailored clothes for the best possible fit. Those in between shapes must resort to trial and error to decide what's best for them; ready to wear or tailored.

In Bangladesh, there is a great tradition of getting clothes custom tailored; some men swear by tailors making clothes for them for generations! So many great options are available today for custom tailored clothes. Boutiques like Zurhem, Sarto, Dapper Bespoke and many others provide fantastic solutions for bespoke clothes, and the quality of their services is top notch. They also offer premium fabrics imported from Italy, France, and other parts of the world and cater to their client's wish. They also offer styling services, which is a splendid way to elevate one's wardrobe based on lifestyle, personality, and personal preference.

A great wardrobe isn't one full of designer clothes, but a collection of clothes that are versatile, comfortable, fit perfectly and above all, is practical. Having decided one's personal style and the perfect fit, let's look at the key pieces all men should have in his wardrobe. A great pair of jeans, preferably in a dark wash is an absolute necessity, followed by dress pants in dark colours, like black and navy. A pair of khakis, and corduroy pants, and a linen one for casual wear should be sufficient. A few good shirts in white, light blue and black, along with a couple of striped and checked ones is next. Cotton or linen shirts for casual use along with Polo-necked T-shirts in solid colours, as well as crew neck ones must also be included.

For semi-formal wear, a linen jacket in a lightweight material is great for daytime activities. Safari jackets are also extremely comfortable and look great. Go for light beige or khaki. A navy blazer with gold buttons is versatile as it can be worn during the day as well as night. And then comes the all-important formal wear. Invest in a custom-tailored suit, made with premium fabrics that will stay in your wardrobe for years to come. Choose navy or deep pewter, as these two colours work well with most styles. When building your wardrobe, quality over quantity is essential; always choose timeless styles and pieces that will stay relevant for years to come and you will reach for them always.

Lastly, a few great accessories such as a fine timepiece or two, great ties and pocket squares, and good quality shoes will be essential additions to your collection. Above all, when dressing up, be mindful of the colours and patterns to create a stylish look that is uniquely yours!

By Sabrina N Bhuiyan
Photo: Adnan Rahman
Model: Rupom
Fashion Direction & Styling: Sonia Yeasmin Isha
Wardrobe: Gentleman's Wardrobe (GW)
Makeup: Noyon
Location: Amari Dhaka

#FASHION & BEAUTY

FROM WATCHES TO RINGS
Must-Have Men's Accessories

For those who think men's jewellery and accessories are modern trends, prepare to be astounded. Men have accessorised themselves since time immemorial, using these adornments to express their unique style and personality. Modern day accessories take it up a notch, using rings, necklaces, watches and bracelets, to make a bold statement.

Necklaces
Whether a simple chain or a daring pendant, few things can elevate a man's look like a good necklace. Shahrukh Khan's massive diamond necklace at the IIFA 2025 may have been designed to make a statement, especially thanks to its apparent glamour and price point, but even without the glitz, most necklaces, such as Figaro chains, box chains, snake chains, and anchor chains are popular options that do the job well. Good to pair with open-necked shirts or plain tees, most such chains have stood the test of time and lived to tell the tale.

Bracelets
Common as day, men's bracelets can be subdued or bold, depending on the occasion and the intent. Some signature bracelets, such as Salman Khan's famous Feroza, have been copied far and wide; simpler bracelets include leather bands, leader cuffs or braided bracelets, bangle bracelets and rope bracelets. Minimal and classy, most bracelets have the ability to make a man look good without trying too hard.

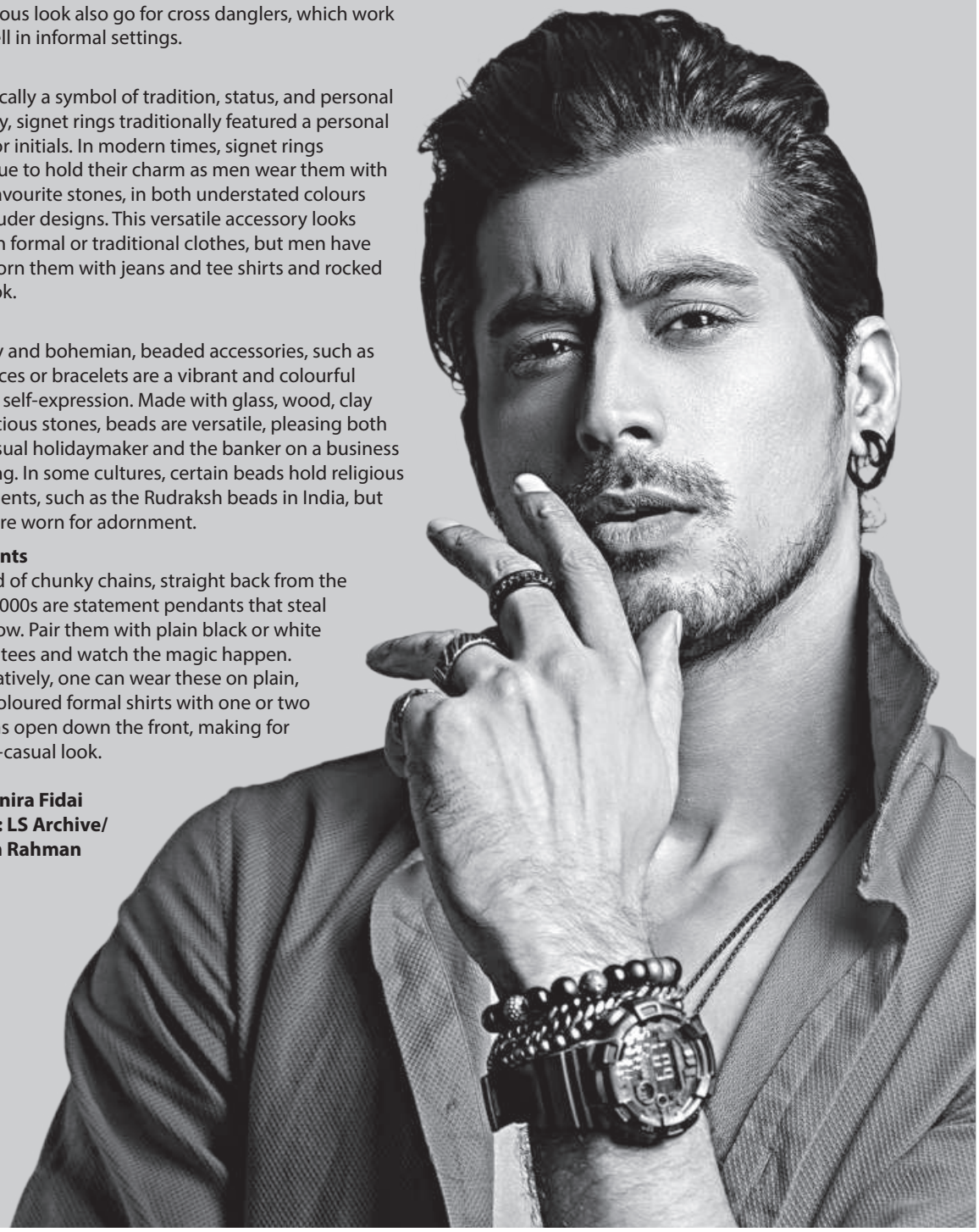
Earrings
Slightly controversial, especially in formal settings, earrings are a hit or miss depending on how one carries them. Worn with confidence, earrings can look trendy, flaunted on one ear or both. Earrings come in varieties such as small hoops, or studs; men that want a more audacious look also go for cross danglers, which work out well in informal settings.

Rings
Historically a symbol of tradition, status, and personal identity, signet rings traditionally featured a personal crest, or initials. In modern times, signet rings continue to hold their charm as men wear them with their favourite stones, in both understated colours and louder designs. This versatile accessory looks best on formal or traditional clothes, but men have also worn them with jeans and tee shirts and rocked the look.

Beads
Beachy and bohemian, beaded accessories, such as necklaces or bracelets are a vibrant and colourful way of self-expression. Made with glass, wood, clay or precious stones, beads are versatile, pleasing both the casual holidaymaker and the banker on a business meeting. In some cultures, certain beads hold religious sentiments, such as the Rudraksh beads in India, but most are worn for adornment.

Pendants
Instead of chunky chains, straight back from the early 2000s are statement pendants that steal the show. Pair them with plain black or white baggy tees and watch the magic happen. Alternatively, one can wear these on plain, dark-coloured formal shirts with one or two buttons open down the front, making for a semi-casual look.

By Munira Fidai
Photo: LS Archive/ Adnan Rahman



#RELATIONSHIPS & FAMILY

Top 5 on-screen bromances that define true friendship

Friendship, in its purest form, is absolutely divine. It's a connection that needs no blood ties but carries the same weight. On screen, bromance portrays a softer, more vulnerable side of friendship. Two guys meet, clash, connect. And, suddenly, they're inseparable. When life throws danger or heartbreak our way, it's that friend who shows up to shield us, crack a joke in our darkest moment, or sit silently until the storm passes. On-screen bromances capture this magic, offering us evergreen relationships that remind us that no treasure is greater than a loyal friend by your side.

Here are five of the best bromances ever portrayed on screen:

Chandler and Joey — Friends

Chandler Bing and Joey Tribbiani are one of TV's most beloved duos. Whether they were testing out their new recliners, cracking jokes all the time, or raising a chick and a duck like proud parents, their friendship was the soul of the show. Chandler's sarcasm and Joey's cluelessness balanced each other perfectly. They had their fights, yes, but they never stayed apart for long.

In the season finale, when Chandler asked Joey to choose between an awkward hug or a lame-cool-guy handshake as they said their farewells, the 'awkward' hug that followed felt emotional to the core.

Leonard and Sheldon — The Big Bang Theory

If bromance ever existed between two nerds, it would be Leonard and Sheldon from The Big Bang Theory. Sheldon's pride often clashed with Leonard's patience, yet somehow the two geniuses always found a way to tolerate each other. They spent most of their time together, whether arguing in their apartment or working side by side at Caltech.

Behind all the sarcasm, their bond was like family. When Sheldon ran away on a train, it was Leonard who went after him and brought him home. And in the end, Sheldon honoured Leonard as his best man and thanked him during his Nobel Prize speech, showing that their bond was always stronger than the little ways they annoyed each other.

Sherlock and Watson — Sherlock

Would Sherlock even survive without Watson? Probably not. Sherlock may have the brains, but Watson is the glue that holds everything together. From the moment they meet, it's clear their friendship is bound to be real and lasting.

Together, they hold the perfect balance: Sherlock, brilliant but emotionally detached, and Watson, steady and empathetic, supporting him emotionally when logic isn't enough, proving that even the greatest detective in the world needs a best friend to keep him human.

Jai and Veeru — Sholay

Bollywood has given us many great pairs, but none come close to Jai and Veeru from Sholay. They are the ultimate "Yeh dosti hum nahi todenge" ("We'll never let this friendship break") duo. Jai's calm, reserved vibe and Veeru's loud, fun energy made them perfect complements, making them a duo to fight in every battle against injustice. Whether they were taking down bandits or joking on the road, their bond was inseparable.

They sang together, fought together, and in the end, Jai gave his life in the fight against Gabbar's men, dying in the arms of his best friend Veeru, making their friendship one of cinema's most unforgettable.

Andy and Red — The Shawshank Redemption

Not all bromances are about laughter; some are about surviving the darkest places imaginable. The Shawshank Redemption gave us Andy and Red, two men trapped in prison who find freedom in each other's company. Andy's quiet determination and Red's wisdom created a bond that carried them through years of hardship. Their friendship was all about trust, loyalty, and the promise of hope. And when Red finally finds Andy at the end, it's one of cinema's most satisfying reunions.

This bromance taught us that real friends don't just stand by you, they wait for you, no matter how long it takes.

By Jawwad Sami Neogi
Photo: Collected

#TRAVEL

Enjoy Dubai on a budget without missing the magic

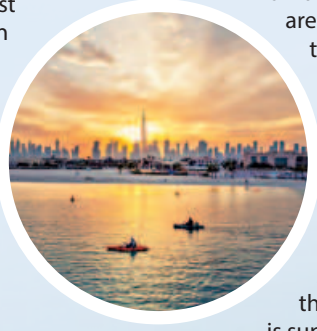
After a long hiatus, it seems that some lucky ones are managing to make their way into UAE for tourism purposes, even on Bangladeshi passports. While we remain hopeful for more of such heartening news, here is how you can make the most of one of UAE's most alluring cities — Dubai — on a slim budget.

When one thinks of Dubai, words such as luxury and opulence come to mind first. Think of the mighty Burj Khalifa lighting up the skies, or the golden Dubai Frame glinting through New and Old Dubai. Yes, the city is all that and then some, but its real beauty lies in its nooks and crannies, most of which are almost as affordable as good ol' Bangkok — almost.

Street Smarts

When you land in Dubai, you may be tempted to buy a sim right off the bat. Brush that thought away, as sims at the airport are easily triple the price of those you can get outside of it. Once out, look for the nearest MRT (metro station) if travelling light, as this can save you quite a bit of money.

Metros are great for fast and cheap commutes inside the city. Moreover, stations are peppered quite close to each other, so you are almost always around one. Children ride free and NOL cards are a great investment as they come at a nominal fee and some initial credit, and allow you to commute through trains, buses, water buses, and even some taxis. If metros are not your thing, opt for a taxi, instead of ridesharing vehicles, which are more likely to overcharge you.



What to Do

There are a number of things you can do in Dubai that are cheap, or even free. And for the Instagram enthusiast, the good news is that mostly all the spots are Insta-worthy.

For instance, one of the most beautiful buildings in the world, the Museum of the Future in Dubai, has an entire floor that is free for tourists. Take pictures by the coveted "V" sculpture outside the museum and then head indoors to pet a robotic dog, or marvel at a flying dolphin. Upper floors are great for exploration too, but come at a slightly steeper cost.

If you want to soak in the views of the city without breaking the bank, skip the Burj and head to the Dubai Frame. For a mere 40 AED, you can enjoy breath-taking views of the city and walk the glass floor.

Go to Dubai Mall for window shopping, and then head out its doors for the best view of the Burj Khalifa. Time this activity for the evening as the lights on the Burj and its surrounding buildings make for an astounding skyline you wouldn't want to miss.

For a relaxing beach outing, head to Kite Beach, which welcomes visitors until 2 AM at night. Clean, colourful and exciting, Kite Beach is one of the few free beaches that also have child-friendly activities along its shores.

If you enjoy relaxing walks, there's nothing better than the Marina Walk near Jumeirah Beach to unwind. With views of the cruise boats on the Persian Gulf coastline, the promenade boasts a clean, pedestrian friendly walkway, lined with food shops. It is a touristy area, so be sure to check for the more economical food options.

Missing the Dubai Fountains? A close second to the OG is the Skyblaze Fountain Show at Atlantis The Royal, Jumeirah. While the hotel itself is super lavish and equally pricey, the fountain show is free for all viewers, regardless of whether they are staying at The Atlantis.

If you enjoy history, a walk along the Al Fahidi neighbourhood might appeal to you. An older section of Dubai, located in Bur Dubai, Al Fahidi is famous for its simple, and heat resistant

architecture. Step into the neighbourhoods' souvenir shops or simply stroll along the lanes for a truly traditional experience.

Where to Shop

Dubai is known for its tax-free gold and electronics, so if you have money saved up for those items, you are in luck. The Gold Souk in Dubai is famous for its gold shops and the viral perfumery, Yusuf Bhai's, but may not be the most cost-effective option for a slimmer pocket.

Head instead to Meena Bazar for gold, electronics, and very cheap, good quality personal care items. Department stores such as Day to Day, Hollywood and 1-20 AED stores are almost always engaged in price wars where the only true winner is the customer!

Choose the Grand Souk Deira for kunafa chocolates, dried fruits, and Pashmina items at steal prices, and then take a water taxi for just 1 AED for an exciting ride across Dubai Creek. Hop off at Naif Market, where you can pick up engraved shawls, cheap, great quality luggage, perfumes, watches, A-Grade brand replicas, and so much more.

Where to Eat

When in Dubai, eat as the locals do. With kebabs, falafel, shawarma and more, Middle Eastern cuisine has something to offer to every taste profile. From the OG Pakistani restaurant in Dubai, Ravi, which is as cheap as 15 AED per head, to branches of Karachi Darbar at similar prices, food lovers can enjoy a variety of gastronomical delights at a reasonable cost.

Popular breakfast point, B&B in Oud Metha, the viral Iranian kebab joint Ostadi near Al Fahidi, and Chapli kebabs from Lamcy also offer food lovers a variety of delicious eats without burning a hole in their wallets.

By Munira Fidai
Photo: Collected

#HEALTH & FITNESS

Why Men Deserve Spa Days

A spa day is more than a luxury — it is an investment in your well-being, energy, and confidence. Yet, for many men, a spa visit feels foreign or unnecessary, even though it could be exactly what they need to recharge and thrive.

The Stereotype

When it comes to self-care, men are known to hold back — rarely indulging with skin care or a spa day as vehemently as women would. Ask a man when he last had a spa day, and he will probably just shrug it off — that's a stereotype deeply instilled in our gender norms. With its zen ambiance, elegant interiors, and a voluminous list of grooming treatments, spas often seem unappealing to men, many of whom still think of them as spaces meant for women.

Whenever they need a self-treatment, men are more likely to get together with their friends over a meal or coffee, go outdoors, or travel the world, rather than schedule a spa appointment.

The Origin of the Spa Culture

The word **"spa"** comes from a small town in **Belgium** called Spa, known since ancient Roman times for its therapeutic treatments in presence of nature's "healing waters."

Different civilisations in Europe had built their own versions of spas, using thermal baths, mineral springs, and massages for healing and relaxation, serving as both traditional wellness centres and social hubs. Many historical figures and elites from royal dynasties, as well as artists and musicians, including Leo Tolstoy, Lord Byron, and Winston Churchill, visited these spas and found inspiration in their therapeutic nature.

Initially built as a privilege exclusive to the elite class, spas over time began to evolve into an experience accessible to a wider audience. Modern-day spas are actually microcosms inspired by the luxurious spa experiences of the early 20th century.

Spas were believed to have restorative powers that could heal, and even prevent illness in a person's body, and visiting them were considered a cherished ritual.

Why Men Should Consider Spas

Needless to say, most men nowadays are often stressed out, given the fast-paced life today. While taking care of everyone's needs, men often forget their own.

Constantly thinking about work, family and others, while neglecting your own care is neither a healthy, nor a sustainable way of living life. To keep going through the heavy lifting of life, you need to find ways to rejuvenate your energy and motivation. Scheduling a spa appointment could be a step in that direction.

While it may feel awkward for men trying a spa for the first time, everyone deserves to pamper themselves and practice self-care. If you're trying a spa for the first time, it is recommended to choose a beginner-friendly massage such as a Swedish massage or aromatherapy, both gentle and relaxing in nature.

Making time to blow off steam with a visit to the spa should be your priority every once in a while, whether it's once a month or a few times a year — depending on your schedule and lifestyle. A quick visit to the spa can help relieve anxiety and stress, leaving you feeling refreshed and rejuvenated.

Studies have found that taking control of your self-care can eventually boost your self-esteem, making you feel better about yourself. This kind of confidence can help you succeed in other areas of your life, including but not limited to, work, social interactions, and personal fitness.

A spa can simultaneously take care of your health and grooming needs. It can help improve your insomnia or difficulty of sleeping by reducing cortisol, a stress hormone that causes muscle tension and stiffness in the body.

When you're dealing with health and grooming, it is important to choose a spa with a calming environment that will help you relax.

Great for Romance and Bromance

Pairing with a friend or your spouse for a spa session can be your newly-found love language. Sharing this experience and enjoying a couple's massage with your significant other is bound to strengthen your bond. By planning this unconventional date, instead of the usual ones at a restaurant or the movies, you can add a new layer of enigma to the romance.

Romance aside, spa sessions are becoming a popular hangout for friends, too. Beyond hitting the gym together, you can head to the hair salon with your pals, and book spa sessions and body massages, making the spa centre your newly-claimed man cave and changing the norms of modern-day bromance activities. Besides, it is way more fun to have someone to chat with while you get a Swedish massage or Alpha Hair Therapy.

Whether you are male or female, taking care of yourself is important because life can get heavy, but a relaxing spa session can indeed help make it feel lighter.

By Minhazur Rahman Alvee
Photo: Adnan Rahman
Location: Spa Rooms - Amari Dhaka

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#PERSPECTIVE

DHAKA'S HIDDEN GEM
The gamcha market of Shyamoli

On the busy road of Shyamoli, something unexpected at the roadside catches the eye: rows of colourful gamchas hanging like paintings on the walls. Their vibrant striped patterns ripple gently in the air, as if the city itself is breathing in colours again.

In a city where pollution and concrete dominate, this small gamcha market sparkles like a living canvas, bringing not only beauty but also raw tradition back into Dhaka's heart.

The gamcha is one of the oldest and simplest cultural symbols of our country. Light, practical, and deeply rooted in rural life, it is more than just a piece of cloth. Farmers tie it around their heads under the sun, rickshaw pullers wipe sweat with it, and at home, it serves as a multipurpose cloth. It carries the story of the village into the city, and the perfect location to witness this is in the Shyamoli gamcha market.

The market usually opens around 10 AM and closes by 10 or 11 PM. Every Saturday, vans arrive carrying fresh bundles of gamchas, most from Sirajganj, with some from Narsingdi and Kumarkhali in Kushtia. Everything here is made of cotton, with three to four different types of gamchas on display. Prices are as simple as the gamchas themselves: a basic cotton gamcha can cost as little as Tk 30, while larger, better-finished ones can go up to Tk 200. Towels, mostly sourced from Kumarkhali and known to sellers as tawal gamcha or towailla, are sold for around Tk 150.

Behind the rows of gamchas are the men who keep this tradition alive. Md Rafiqul Islam, now 55, has been selling gamchas for over a decade. "It has been 10 to 12 years since I started here," he says, sitting and waiting for customers. Alongside gamchas, he also sells lungis brought in from Kushtia, priced between Tk 250 and Tk 300, depending on the design.

Another seller, Md Shahadat Hossain, was busy showing gamchas to a customer. His shop was beautifully decorated to attract passers-by. He explains how production has changed: "Before, everything was handmade. In a whole day, only four or five gamchas could be made. Now, with machines, one person can produce 50 to 60 a day."

The history of this market also tells a story of persistence. Momrez Ali, one of the original sellers, recalls starting his shop back in 2002. "At that time, there were only two shops here," he shares. Today, there are around 12 shops on the roadsides of Shyamoli. What started as a small effort has now grown into a recognisable spot for anyone seeking gamchas at wholesale prices.

Among the sellers is Md Salahuddin, whose stall stands beside Bangladesh Specialized Hospital in Shyamoli. His roots in the trade go even deeper. "My father and grandfather were both gamcha makers in Chapainawabganj. Eventually, I learned the craft too," he shares. "But these days, we only sell after collecting from the vendors." The family legacy continues through his shop here in Dhaka.

Walking through the market, one feels more than just the splash of colours. Each gamcha is a bridge between past and present, between rural looms and urban lives. They may seem like simple cotton clothes, but they carry stories of families, of generations who have made, sold, and used them in everyday life.

The gamcha market reminds us that beauty does not always come from the new, but often from what has been with us for centuries. The walls of Shyamoli, alive with gamchas, remind us of our roots, our tradition, and when displayed with heart, can brighten even the greyest corners of the city.

By Jawwad Sami Neogi
Photo: Jawwad Sami Neogi