VOLUME 25, ISSUE 14, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2025
BHADRA 25, 1432 BS

Star LIFE Style

E-mail: lifestyleds@yahoo.com
64-65 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1215. A publication of The Daily Star

Polka *patterns*

PHOTO: HILL VALLEY PRODUCTION
MODEL: KREESTI DEWAN
WARDROBE: SOZPODOR BY TENZING CHAKMA

#FASHION & BEAUTY

A gentleman's guide to beard styles

A man's beard is more than facial hair — it's his signature. The difference between rugged charm and polished sophistication often lies not in the length of the beard, but in its style. Choosing the right one means understanding how it complements face shape, personality, and the image a man wants to project. The right beard has to work with face shape, lifestyle, and even how much time one is willing to spend in the barber's chair.

The Clean Stubble
Often considered the "little black dress" of men's grooming, the stubble works almost universally. Short and sharp, it suits square and oval faces particularly well by adding definition without overpowering the jawline. Its appeal lies in its balance — rugged enough to look masculine, neat enough to look professional. It's been known to be favoured by actors, entrepreneurs, and creatives who like to appear put-together without seeming over-styled. Maintenance is simple for this one. Just a trim every two to three days keeps it from slipping into scruff.

The Full Beard
A full beard carries authority. It adds maturity to younger faces and gravitas to older ones. Best for men with rectangular or longer face shapes, a full beard can balance out length by adding width. However, while it speaks of confidence and strength, it also comes with responsibility — regular shaping is necessary to avoid the "wild woodsman" look. For corporate professionals, keeping edges clean around the neckline and cheeks is essential. Expect to visit the salon every two weeks, alongside daily care with oils or balms to prevent excess dryness.

The Short Boxed Beard
This is the beard style for those who are forever confused between a full beard and "something easier." Trimmed close to the face, with sharp cheek and neckline lines, the short boxed beard looks neat, while still offering the fullness of a beard. Ideal for oval and diamond face shapes, it projects maturity without seeming too heavy. It's low-risk for professionals — lawyers, bankers, or executives — who want to wear facial hair without raising eyebrows in conservative settings. Salon visits every 10-14 days keep it precise.

The Goatee
The goatee — whether in its classic form (chin only) or with a connected moustache — directs attention to the centre of the face. It's a style that suits round faces well, adding angularity and elongation. Goatees require precision which means frequent trimming is necessary, making salon visits weekly or biweekly part of your life.

It's often the vibe of this style that calls to people. Artistic or intellectual, it has historically been a favourite among musicians, professors, and men who prefer a cultivated, slightly unconventional look.

The Iconic Moustache
While not technically a beard, the moustache deserves its place in men's grooming. From pencil-thin to handlebar, a moustache changes the face's entire character. Best paired with a strong jawline, it often works on square faces, and is for men who enjoy a statement accessory.

It demands confidence and pairs well with professions where individuality is celebrated — think creative directors, writers, or those in fashion. Some styles are surprisingly high-maintenance, requiring daily grooming, while others can be left to grow naturally with just a comb and wax.

Matching Beards to Seasons and Lifestyle At the end of the day, choosing a beard style is less about trends and more about what feels authentic. The best beards don't just frame the face, they frame the man himself — highlighting his natural features while underscoring the way he wants the world to read him. Whether it's the effortless charm of stubble, the authority of a full beard, or the distinct flair of a moustache, the right beard can easily change the way a man carries himself.

Interestingly, beard styles can also shift with the seasons. A full beard often finds its place in winter, adding warmth and pairing well with heavier clothing. In contrast, stubble or shorter styles feel fresher in summer, complementing lighter attire.

Lifestyle matters too. A man constantly on the move might lean toward stubble for its ease, while someone who enjoys the ritual of grooming may happily maintain a more sculpted style.

By Nusrath Jahan
Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad Ibne Sayed

#PERSPECTIVE

The liberating power of saying - No!

What if the very definition of a 'good woman' — being endlessly nice, selfless, and agreeable — was actually holding you back? "Be nice, be good, be kind!" was a powerful mantra, reinforced by women in my family. So, when artist Judy Chicago, our commencement speaker, declared, "Remember, you cannot have it all in life; you have to choose," I disagreed. If I could just say yes to everyone, I'd be happy and have everything.

Soon after my son's birth, that fantasy crumbled. My work, social and personal lives buzzed. But an alarm blared in my head; I was faltering with my commitments. Often double-booked, desperate to be the person who everyone loved, who never uttered that tiny, terrifying word. My stark realisation; something had to give. I was failing to deliver, and I was failing myself.

Embracing the Unapologetic "No"

It was clear: I needed a radical intervention. I embraced a very foreign concept, self-care — it felt akin to joining a secret society. Before committing to anything new, I started asking myself: "Would this actually make my life better?" If the answer was a resounding negative, then it was time to say 'no.'

It wasn't easy. I swear, I felt physical pain; my stomach churned, my palms

sweated. I adopted a two-step strategy. First, the classic deferral, "Let me check my calendar" — this bought crucial time to hyperventilate privately. Then, the email or WhatsApp: "I'm so terribly sorry, but I have to regretfully decline." Slowly, the discomfort melted away, and my 'no' morphed from a mumbled apology to a clear, confident boundary. As Sylvia Plath observed in The Bell Jar, "It never occurred to me to say no." Her words depict being swept along, making the liberation of even a hesitant 'no' feel deeply significant.

Saying 'no' for me will always be connected to Judy Chicago. Years after hearing her speak, I saw her phenomenal work, The Dinner Party, at the Brooklyn Museum. This ground-breaking installation is a defiant 'no' to the historical erasure of women from art, history, and culture. It's a refusal to accept the status quo where women's achievements were overlooked or trivialised. The Dinner Party highlights women with remarkable achievements despite societal constraints. Many implicitly or explicitly said 'no' to the relentless demands of traditional female roles, strategically carving out space for their ambitions.

Prioritisation was crucial when my son's kindergarten teacher called, concerned he was struggling with reading and writing. All the 'noise' of my overscheduled life

instantly faded. I said no to every dinner invitation and casual hangout. Beyond my work, my world narrowed down to a singular focus: getting him up to speed. I worked closely with his teachers, diligently practicing with him every evening. It was a powerful, first-hand lesson in how fiercely we must cut out non-essentials to zero in on what matters.

My career's pivotal 'no' came a few years after moving back to Bangladesh. I received what seemed like an incredible job offer: setting up an impact business in skill development with foreign investments. It was an amazing learning experience, enabling me to build from

the ground up — a skill that has since allowed me to launch other ventures. However, after the initial excitement wore off, the work became mundane. It no longer served my purpose of professional growth. Despite a deliberate 'no,' I acted responsibly, giving four months' notice to ensure a smooth transition and find a replacement.

The Gift of "Me-Time" and Boundaries

Saying 'no' freed me up to have time for myself: a magical space for self-care. I started walking ten to twenty thousand steps a day. Just walking. Making myself a priority wasn't selfish; it was the biggest gift to myself. With this lifestyle change, I was drawing boundaries. Even with beloved friends and family, those wonderful humans who often unknowingly demand so much. If I had other priorities, I'd let them know. If a certain behaviour rubbed me the wrong way, I gently distanced myself.

It felt liberating, almost like a superpower. I was feeling like Ganga from the Mahabharata, the river goddess who famously chose to leave if things didn't go her way. Similarly, I walked away, and set my own terms. Some might have whispered my actions were 'selfish' but in the long run, I transformed into a more content individual. My new-found peace meant sharper focus and greater productivity. As Gloria Steinem wisely reminds us, "Once we give up searching for approval, we often find it easier to earn respect." This is the secret of 'no' — it's about ditching the approval-seeking game for genuine self-respect.

Passing on the "No" Superpower

Now, my mission extends to my son. He's a kind boy, always going the extra mile to help his classmates. I beam with pride at his compassion. But I also know the importance of teaching him to draw his own lines in the sand. True empathy isn't about perpetual self-sacrifice; it's about nurturing your own well-being so you can genuinely be happy, well-resourced, and from that strong place, help others effectively. My transformation began with wielding that short yet powerful word: 'no.' It's a word that doesn't shrink us; it defines us, carving out the space we need to thrive. This profound truth echoes through history in the lives of incredible women who dared to defy expectations.

One such figure is Nawab Faizunnesa. She was the first and only female 'Nawab' within the British Raj. She fiercely refused to move to her husband's land, asserting her autonomy against patriarchal norms. Later, she even boldly declined a condescending offer to the title of Begum from the Queen of England, insisting on her own worth. Her story inspires us to embrace that mighty word to set us free.

By Zareen Mahmud Hosein
Photo: Collected

The writer is Partner, Snehasish Mahmud & Co., Chartered Accountants, and Founder, HerStory Foundation and CholPori

#LIFEHACKS

DIGITAL DETOX
The cleanse you didn't know you needed

In a frenzied, fast paced world such as ours, making a decision to go tech free might seem radical, or even impractical. Yet, more and more people seem to be recognising the merits of a life without tech, challenging themselves to go without it for a few hours or days at a time.

Millennials may have been the last generation to see both a tech free and a tech heavy life. Gen Z, clearly, has never known a life without it. Needless to say, both the age groups dominant in the workforce admit that they are now heavily reliant on technology for their work, daily lives and social endeavours. And it takes only a few hours without it to get them to realise, they are addicted to it too.

Despite all the benefits it brings, technology is draining. The constant work notifications, the pressure to come off as relevant on social media, the need to be "switched on" all the time — all of it can be exhausting and take a toll on the mind, even if we internalise the strain as part of modern life. Interestingly, however, the sheer unsustainability of this digitally saturated life is becoming evident in the rising cases of social media bullying, burnout from work, depression, and in some extreme cases, death.

So, what do you do then? How do you extricate yourself from the only sort of life you have known in forever?

Incrementally, that's how.

If you have realised that technology in such substantial amounts is bad for you and you wish to do something about it, you are already on your way to a digital detox. "I first noticed that technology was the culprit behind my exhaustion when I

lost my phone while on vacation — and appreciated the peace!" shared Fariha Toma, a 30-year-old freelancer. "When I finally found my device, I realised I wanted to use it much less. I understood I could just as easily enjoy sights without having to pull the phone out for a picture, and I could actually talk to people instead of listening to music all the time." Toma ended up making more friends and memories on that trip than ever before, and brought home a life lesson along with the usual souvenirs.

For those who depend on technology a bit too much, it may be easier to set small goals. Start with as little as half an hour and gradually increase to one hour or more per day. Pepper these goals throughout the day, such as the first half an hour of your day, the last half hour before bedtime and so on, as this will allow you to find pockets of time when you know you do not have to use your phone for commute or work purposes. Let people like your friends and colleagues in on the fact that you are trying a digital detox so they know not to knock you unless there is a real emergency.

Understand that this might not be as easy as it seems. We rely on our phones for everything, from sharing rides to ordering food and groceries, checking the weather, tracking our appointments, and so on. "When I first started down the tech-free path, it was scary. I felt like an addict, wanting to reach for my devices every five minutes," confides Rashida Raimin, a stay-at-home-mom. "I really had to keep the phone in a drawer, well out of sight, to be able to concentrate on other things." Rashida mentioned she took up knitting to get her mind off the phone and now, she goes hours at a stretch without needing to glance at it.

Despite the initial challenge, going tech free has several significant benefits. These include increased focus, better sleep and definitely much deeper human connections. "Scrolling the screen before bedtime is something we are all guilty and I can tell you, this is a difficult habit to kick," mentioned Annesha Raha, a dance and yoga instructor. "It seems mindless (and harmless) but the pictures, colours and sounds can actually be overstimulating for the brain." Annesha shared that once she was ready to wind down, she switched off her phone completely and over time, she has noticed a positive change in her sleep routine.

Fidia Mannan, an MBA student, found that putting down her phone and connecting with new people in her university has allowed her to make connections that would put LinkedIn to shame. "To think, all these resourceful people were right around me," gushed Fidia. "And where was I? On Instagram!"

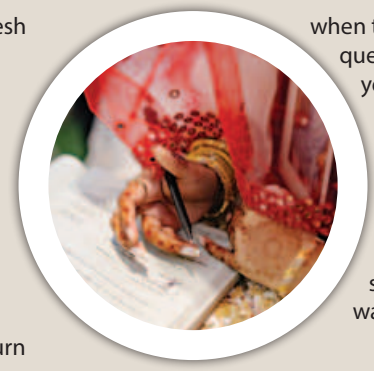
Don't get us wrong — we love all things tech; there's simply no denying its benefits. And going cold turkey on it is neither sustainable, nor prudent. However, perhaps it's time we became a little bit more aware of how much time we spend on technology, how we spend it, and what we can do to reduce dependency. After all, it's not about forgoing it for good, but rather about knowing when to take a healthy pause from it.

By Munira Fidai
Photo: LS Archive/ Sazzad Ibne Sayed

#PERSPECTIVE

Marriage equality begins with the nikah

Marriage customs in Bangladesh often come wrapped in layers of tradition, ceremony, and unspoken gender expectations. But what would happen if a bride, right before stepping into the threshold of her 'forever,' decides to negotiate her role with sheer wit? In this short story, "Qubool?" a wedding in Dhaka takes an unexpected turn



when the bride's answer to the Qazi's question turns into a light-hearted yet sharp reminder that equality can start right at the altar.

The day was dated 14 December, 2018. A winter afternoon in Dhaka brought blustery winds that had people clutching shawls, sweaters, and jackets for warmth.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 9

#FASHION & BEAUTY

Timeless, trendy, and totally you — let's talk polka dots

Who doesn't love polka dots? One would be hard pressed to find a print so cheerful, so cute and yet, so elegant! Don't they instantly transport you to the glory days of girlhood, when your mother would sweetly dress you up in a lovely pink silk frock strewn with white polka dots, trimmed with cute lace? Your most precious possession, it made you feel like the princess from your fairy-tale book that you spent hours reading! And then, in your teens, you bought a slightly grown-up version of the same dress, only this time, it was a slinky white number with black dots, making you look chic and sophisticated! And now, in your late twenties, polka dots are everywhere, and the eternally sweet little girl in you is here for it, and how! That's the beauty of polka dots — she is a beauty and she makes everyone look pretty! She will hold your hand, be your friend from childhood to girlhood to womanhood and beyond!

Photo: Hill valley Production
Model: Kreesti Dewan
Wardrobe: Sozpodor by Tenzing Chakma

#FASHION & BEAUTY

For the love of POLKA DOTS!

The best thing about polka dots is their versatility. A silk shirt with small polka dots is perfect for office, paired with a black skirt or pants. A black pussy bow number is also another fabulous option for work as well, with its oversized bow that adds a sweetness to your look. What's best, you can easily transition from the boardroom to your best friend's place, looking pretty in your polka dotted shirt! Just change out your pearl studs for some gold hoops, and voila! Speaking of hanging out with friends, a red dress with white dots is perfect for such occasions; sweet yet sophisticated.

Tenzing Chakma is enamoured with polka dots, and rightly so! His new collection is an ode to polka dots in various shapes, forms, and colours, which makes our hearts sing! A tangerine dress with ruffles on the sleeves is feminine and flirty; just the dress for your end of summer getaways. Made of soft, breathable georgette that is easy, breezy, and beautiful, these dresses are a dream for our sweltering summer days! A black halter neck dress with white polka dots is incredibly sexy and elegant at the same time, and has been a favourite of fashionable ladies since the Fifties. Isn't it amazing how a trend is so trendy and yet so timeless at the same time?

Polka dots are mostly associated with western attires, and yet, they look fantastic when reimagined with traditional, ethnic outfits too, which is a solid testament to their unique versatility. Bangladeshi designers have put their own distinct spin on polka dots by combining them with traditional designs and styles, creating a fusion that is extraordinary!

A white Muslin saree with black polka dots is the perfect foil for zardozi embellishments, cutdana, which look bold and beautifully Bangladeshi! This saree can be happily worn at an engagement party or a grand dawat with lovely Kundan jewellery to stunning effect. The same saree with multi-coloured embroidery patches is lovely for an afternoon tea soirée. A mint green number with pink polka dots and lovely pearl embellishments will look amazing with a sleeveless blouse, hair in a French knot, and some oversized pearl earrings for your next daytime wedding reception.

A sleeveless blue kameez with white polka dots, and tone on tone embroidery, will look great for your best friend's birthday bash. Pair it with sky high heels, some chandelier earrings, and you are bound to be the polka-dotted belle of your ball!

By Sabrina N Bhuiyan
Photo: Hill valley Production
Model: Kreesti Dewan
Wardrobe: Sozpodor by Tenzing Chakma

SARTORIAL STRATEGIST

SHABAB DIN SHAREQ
The writer is Founder & CEO of Gentleman's Wardrobe

Cost Per Wear: A simple math trick that changes shopping psychology

Open your wardrobe. Push past the shirts, the polos, the piles of clothes stacked too close together. And there, you will find it... the panjabi you bought last Pahela Boishakh. Folded neatly, and hidden between twenty others, still crisp, because it waits for that one special day. Maybe once. Maybe not at all since the day you bought it.

We buy clothes like this often. Excited in the moment, guilty in hindsight. But here's the real cost; that Tk 3,000 Pahela Boishakh panjabi, worn once, cost you Tk 3,000 per wear. Meanwhile, the same-priced basic white panjabi you own and have worn more than fifty times cost just Tk 60 per wear. This is Cost per Wear (CPW), a truth that changes how we see every garment.

How to purchase with CPW in mind?

The best purchases are rarely the most exciting at first glance. The idea is to avoid clothes that stand out too loudly. It may sound strange, but that is the beauty. Before purchasing, ask yourself; can I wear this in multiple settings? Can I repeat it several times a month? Will it be still relevant after five years? Take that white panjabi, for example. If made from Egyptian cotton with a subtle printed pattern, it might feel too plain in the store. But once inside your wardrobe, it becomes the easiest choice. You reach for it on Jummah, at a family dawat, a gaye holud, and even on Pahela Boishakh. Each repeat lowers its CPW and raises its true worth.

Or, think about a pair of classic black Oxford shoes. They do not grab your attention on the shelf, but they will carry you through weddings, job interviews, office meetings, and formal dinners for years. Every scuff makes them richer, not weaker. That is what CPW looks like in action.

This is why knowing your style matters. Moving with every trend is like changing your personality with every setting you belong to. But when you know what truly suits you, consistency becomes your signature. People do not see repetition, they see identity.

Now here is the irony. The more you buy, the less joy you feel. It is the law of diminishing marginal utility. Shopping becomes routine and the thrill fades. But when you buy less and buy with intention, every purchase feels meaningful. You value the garment more. You remember where you wore it, who you were with, and the moments it carries with it.

We see this in life all the time. A girl wearing her mother's saree to a wedding. A young man walking into his first interview wearing his grandfather's silk tie, old but still relevant. These are not clothes. They are stitched memories, carrying stories that still walk with us. And their CPW is priceless.

Cost per wear starts with math, but it ends with meaning. It saves money. It builds character. And it restores the joy of buying. The goal is not to own more, but to own better. To choose the garments that will not only work today but stand with you for decades.

Because one day, when your child wears your blazer or that scarf you loved for years, they will not just inherit clothing. They will inherit your story. And that is a value no receipt will ever capture, only the heart will.

Photo: Courtesy

#RELATIONSHIPS & FAMILY

HOW TO TALK ABOUT MONEY without ruining the relationship

Instead of entering a relationship loudly, money slips in through dinner expenses, travel-related conversations, or the subliminal tension of deciding whether to take a rickshaw or reserve a ride-share. Although they may not be immediately apparent, financial habits can become one of the most noticeable undercurrents in a relationship over time.

CONTINUED TO PAGE 10

#TRAVEL

Tired of crowds? Explore these 5 hidden Asian escapes

If you are a travel enthusiast and want to roam around exploring the hidden gems in Asia, you have arrived at the right place. Join us as we take a deeper look at the underrated tourist destinations in Asia.

Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is, in itself, one of the more underrated Asian countries to travel to, but when it comes to exploring its rich culture, its uniqueness puts it in a class of one. The trails of apricot orchards and the piercing alpine meadows in Zaamin national park in Jizzakh will astonish you.

Next up is the Sitorai Mokhi-Khosa Palace, which translates to "Palace of Moon-Like Stars" in English, where you will fall in love with the glass verandas and luxurious Central Asian architecture. If you are lucky enough, you will get the chance to be greeted by gorgeous peacocks.

Indulge in the oriental flavours and the bustling vibes at Chorsu Bazar in Tashkent.

Pro tip: Don't miss out on the local kebabs and tandoori lambs.

Armenia

The majestic landscape of Sevan Lake, located around 60 km from the capital of Armenia, will capture the heart of any traveller. You must visit the Sevan Writer's house to witness this fabulous Soviet architecture.

From the Smbataberd fortress in the Vayots Dzor region, you can enjoy scenic views of Mount Teksar and Yeghegis village. There are also some nearby religious landmarks such as Tsaghats Kar Monastery and Zorats church.

Armenia also has places to visit for history lovers. When you walk through the 120-meter-long swinging bridge connecting the Old Khndzoresk to New Khndzoresk, it feels like stepping into a whole another world. Khndzoresk is full of mysterious caves, where stories of foregone dwellers echo.

Turkey

Other than the overhyped, tourist-swamped places in Turkey, there are some locations you would not believe exist unless seen with your own eyes. One such place is Pamukkale, known not only for its dazzling, snowy-white beauty but also for the therapeutic effects of bathing in Cleopatra's Thermal Pool.

Varda Viaduct in Adana is famous for being one of the filming locations for the movie *Skyfall*. As one of the tallest railway viaducts in Turkey, it stands as an engineering spectacle.

It is quite hard to believe that something as peaceful as the Ihlara Valley in Cappadocia is the result of several volcanic eruptions in the past. The carvings inside the old churches and the cave paintings will make you ponder the lives of the Byzantine monks who lived here centuries ago.

Kazakhstan

In northern and central Kazakhstan lies the Great Steppe, also called Saryarka. This place is of remarkable ecological importance, as it offers the opportunity to observe unique wildlife, including beautiful migratory birds. Away from the confines of daily life, here you can set yourself free in nature and embrace its vastness.

Located near the Inder Mountains in Atyrau is the picturesque salt lake known as Inder Lake. Besides being an ideal destination for breath-taking photographs, the lake's minerals are also believed to offer healing benefits for various ailments.

To the southeast of the Almaty region lies the alpine lake Tuzkol. This location is perfect for timelapse photography, featuring majestic sky views. Sit by the lake's shore and admire the awe-inspiring panoramic views of the Tien Shan Mountains.

Thailand

Even though Thailand is a very common tourist destination, it is also home to some unique places that usually don't see too much crowds, meaning you can spend some quality time. A quick bus ride from Chiang Rai city leads you to Phu Chi Fah, where you can hike to witness one of the best sunsets in Thailand.

Visit the "walking temple," Wat Tham Pha Plong in Chiang Dao and take a pause to appreciate the artworks at the Makhampom Art Space. The Chiang Dao Hot springs can be a great addition to your to-do list if you want some rejuvenation in nature.

Anyone will fall in love with the turquoise waters of Koh Kradan Island. Snorkelling in the coral reefs of Paradise beach would certainly be one of the most memorable experiences of your life.

By Labiba Tasnim
Photo: Collected

Phu Chi Fan Chian Rai

Marriage equality begins with the nikah

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

In the northernmost part of the city, Faiza sat on her bed in silence, head pressed against warm pillows. For two hours, she hadn't moved, trying to calm the nervous throb in her chest.

The quiet was shattered by the sudden rush of a large crowd into her room. Overdressed guests jostled for space; among them, Sima aunty glittered in gold-plated jewellery over her crimson saree. Faiza's gaze flickered briefly to her sister; they quickly exchanged looks before her eyes landed back on the floor.

Moments later, a tall, dark-bearded man in a white turban and black sherwani entered. It was the Qazi, the Islamic judge. He looked at Faiza, sneered, and asked, "Are you quite ready for your lifetime of unquestionable commitment, dear?"

Without missing a beat, Faiza smiled calmly. "Of course, uncle! Just as ready as he is to wash my dishes from tonight!"

The room froze. A wave of raised eyebrows and disapproving murmurs swept through the guests. Sima aunty's lips tightened. The Qazi shifted uncomfortably, tugging at his beard.

Faiza leaned in, voice still polite. "Clause number 17 of your register, uncle — parties can list special conditions as long as they don't break Shariah law. For me, it was simple. I can't handle slimy stuff in the sink, so my husband's agreed to wash the dishes."

The words hung heavy in the air, seeping through the room like a slow-spreading truth. Faiza's mascara-lined eyes glinted, her lips curling into a triumphant smirk. In that moment, she had quietly overturned the script of a patriarchal tradition.

Just before the aunties could recover, Faiza looked up, and with the slightest trace of mischief, said her final word: **"Qubool."**

As much as we try to promote women empowerment in a developing Bangladesh, only two to three per cent of women appear aware about the unquestionable right that religion provides them with: the right to demand, make amendments to, negotiate for almost anything through the official contract (nikah-nama), before binding into the most important and life-changing relationship of one's life: marriage.

It is now time to advocate for real changes for women in this country — by publicising the right that is already been granted to them without having to ask *(for once):* the right to curate the marriage document as per their own demands, protecting peace and sanity, even if it is to some extent.

By Zarin Khushnud
The writer is a Senior Economics and Business Faculty at Scholastica School in Dhaka.

#RELATIONSHIPS & FAMILY

MICRO-DATING: Short & sweet dating for busy couples

Struggling to balance both your work and love life? For busy birds, it can seem impossible to keep up with the hardships of annoying tasks and making time for your partner to relax and have fun. However, there is a new trend around town that is helping couples out, one that does not require much time or effort, but can bring about a huge change in your bustling routine. It is none other than micro-dating!

A phenomenon growing increasingly popular among busy couples, micro-dating is a technique where you take short times out of your day, ones where you would perhaps be running small tasks or waiting for the time to pass, to use that for a small date. These can range from around just ten minutes to half an hour.

Although it may not sound like much, these small windows can help you to reconnect with your partner without the need for a grand night out or hours of stressing over the perfect outing with your loved one. At its core, micro-dating is all about taking a step back from the daily hustle to check in with your partner, spend some time with them and reconnect at times that would have otherwise been lost to the stress of work or other parts of our everyday lives.

The way you plan to connect with your partner through micro-dating is ultimately up to you. On a day where you may have woken up getting ready for the day alone, perhaps you can start the morning with your partner instead by helping each other prepare for the day along with a side of coffee!

Got a break from work? You can spend that short time calling your partner and treating the sweet moment as a mini 'date.' How about a 15-minute walk with your loved one in the evening, when the both of you are free? These small segments throughout our day, ones that we probably overlook, can be utilised in the best of ways, and that exactly is what micro-dating is all about.

For people with hectic work schedules, or little ones to take care of, micro-dating could be just the thing to make your relationship with your partner even better. Micro-dating is also a great technique for people looking to spend an intimate time with their partner without the need to book an expensive reservation at a fancy restaurant for a date night.

From small cuddles to a hearty laughter with the person you love the most during a short conversation, finding small opportunities to create special moments can strengthen your relationship with your partner. It is a great way to make time for your significant other in just a matter of minutes.

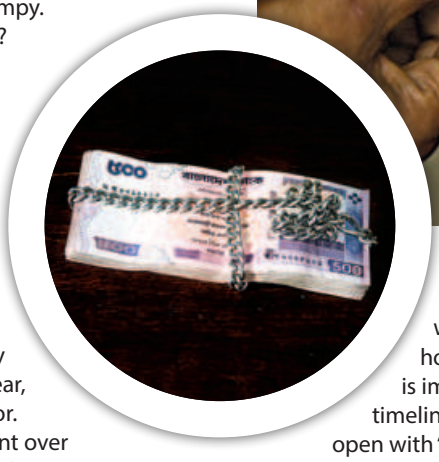
Relationships require patience and commitment, and with so much going on in our lives, an easy yet simple love routine could do the trick. So, if you are someone with very little time in hand, but lots of love in your heart, why not try out micro-dating? An intimate short lunch with your partner might be just the date you need!

By Adiba Islam
Photo: Collected

How to talk about money without ruining the relationship

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Although the term 'financial compatibility' may seem like something out of a premarital counseling brochure, in practice, it's much simpler. It's about whether your ways of earning, spending, saving, and dreaming can live side by side without constant friction. You don't need to have the same salary bracket or the same taste in shoes, but if one person thinks life is too short not to indulge on Friday nights, and the other believes that every spare penny should be kept in a savings account, the road ahead will be bumpy.



Why does it matter? Because money isn't always just about money. It's about values and security, trust and sometimes, even pride. When couples talk about money openly, what they're really doing is laying out their values, what they prioritise, what they fear, and what they hope for. That's why an argument over excessive spending is about more than just a shopping bill; it's also about whether or not both parties feel heard, respected, and have a similar outlook on the future.

Compatibility does not imply that you are mirror images of one another. Rather, it indicates that your approaches can coexist without perpetual hostility. Communication is important, and so is the timeline of it. You can't exactly open with "So, how's your credit score?" on the third date. You can keep it light at first, discuss your preferred weekend activities; whether you're a luxury or low-budget traveller. As the relationship deepens, the questions can too — how do you handle savings, what's your take on debt, how do you envision your future in five years from now?

The 'how' is equally as important as the 'when.' Money talk isn't an interrogation, it's a conversation. Instead of passing judgment, centre it on curiosity. Instead of, "Why do you spend so much on gadgets?" try, "What makes you excited about buying new tech?" This way, you're not just counting numbers, you're also learning the backstory of the decisions.

Spending habits are often the most visible sign of compatibility. If your idea of relaxation is a lavish dinner every weekend and theirs is cooking lentils at home, it doesn't mean doom, it means compromise is coming. Saving habits, though, are where cracks can quietly grow. Some people save for stability, others for dreams, and others not at all.

Then there is the bigger discussion on rent, weddings, children, travel, even retirement (yes, someday). Compatibility doesn't mean you agree on every detail, it means you can negotiate without turning it into World War III. You can say, "I need to feel like we're saving for something," and your partner can say, "I need to feel like we're not living in constant austerity." Both can be true, and both deserve space.

The truth is, financial compatibility isn't about being wealthy or frugal, it's all about being transparent. It's knowing whether your partner is the kind of person who feels safe with a fixed deposit or with a spontaneous holiday ticket. And it's being able to say, without shame, "Here's what I can afford, here's what I hope for, and here's how I see us getting there."

In the end, money will always be in the room with you. Either as an unannounced guest who adds stress, or as a quiet friend who keeps you both in balance. What matters isn't the size of the wallet, but whether the two of you can turn the conversation into something honest, because once you can talk about money, you're really talking about how you want to live, side by side.

By Rehnuma Shahreen
Photo: LS Archive Sazzad Ibne Sayed

#PERSPECTIVE

Letter to my younger self:

WHAT I WISH YOU KNEW IN 2010

Hello old friend,

I am writing from the year 2025, addressing this to my younger self in 2010.

As I stand on the eve of turning thirty in just a few months, I feel like there are a lot of things I need to get off my chest. Time travel is still not possible, unfortunately. So, I must resort to writing letters, knowing that even though you will never get your hands on this, it will give me a little solace.

I remember how I was in 2010. 15 years old, full of hormones, unmatched ego with nothing to back that up and a lot of high hopes for a lot of things. I remember having problems that kept me up at nights, some even made me so upset that I had shed a tear or two.

The fact is, your most severe and tragic problem in 2010 is just another Monday for me. So, I implore you to not see too much into it. Take one problem at a time and go ahead as you solve them, one at a time. Most of your pressing problems are nothing more than just you overthinking.

Most of your problems are created because you were being melodramatic and thought too much into something, creating a problem that wasn't even there in the first place.

I know how this sounds to you. It sounds condescending and it makes you angry. I know you do not want to hear any of these advices from me because you think I do not know what it is like for you. You think I do not and cannot understand your issues. You think nobody does.

But here's the thing; I have already lived all of it and I survived, so trust me — I know and what I speak is from experience.

I know you are thinking if you will ever fall in love. You day dream sometimes about this dark romance that you feel is elusive and will never be yours. I have news for you dear friend. You will fall in love. And it will change your life.

I know the apprehension you are going through; I know your fears and I know your dreams. You will not achieve all of them, and that is for the best. Because you still do not understand what is good for you and what will take you down a path of destruction. Be assured that the good dreams will come true — at a price of course.

Work hard and stop wasting time. Read more. I know you love to read story books and hate history and non-fiction. That will change. You just have not found the right books yet, but you will. And they will open a whole new world to you. By the time you get to my age, your only regret will be that you did not read more.

I remember how self-centred and introverted I used to be in my early years. You will have to shed this narcissistic shell so that you may grow as a person. Being an introvert is probably one of our ubiquitous characteristics that will linger forever.

Still, you should try to communicate with people and build a network because as you will learn in your later years — friends are important. And you are one of the fortunate ones to have some good friends. You aren't going to meet them for another five years at least, but when you do, you will feel like you have known them all your life.

Since I have already lived your life, I know your vice and virtue. And your greatest vice in 2010 was your prejudice. You were too quick to judge people and you used to have very strong opinions about things that you had no idea about. This is a sign of a hypocrite.

Do not be a hypocrite.

There is a lot to learn. Both about people and the world, and form your opinions only based on first-hand experiences. You shall learn these once you start studying for a higher degree.

Yes, you are one of the lucky ones that gets to go to one of the best universities in the country, and it will change your life. You will learn and experience things that you never imagined and the best part is, you will become a better person for it.

You will move out of your hometown soon. Homesickness and nostalgia will be an issue for a while, but you will get over it once you see the bigger picture. The new experiences will curve a man out of your boyish nature.

Unfortunately, you will face hardship, heartbreak, betrayal, humiliation and sometimes, be left stunned. But all these are inevitable as they form the path that leads you to me.

Everything that has ever happened to you will lead you to this moment, when I sit down to address my younger self.

So, listen well old friend — do not forget your manners, they will take you a long way. Do not stop reading, never give up on painting, and your dreams of becoming a writer might one day come true. I know you are ready to make great sacrifices to see your writings published somewhere, so here is a little treat for you.

I write to you through one of the leading newspapers in the country. It sure feels good to see your own writing. So yes, dreams do come true. As long as you are willing to work for it.

By Ashif Ahmed Rudro
Photo: Collected

Star LIFE Style

VOLUME 25, ISSUE 14, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2025, *BHADRA 25, 1432 BS*
A publication of The Daily Star
E-mail: lifestyleds@yahoo.com, 64-65 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1215

#DECOR

Homely sofa sets for your living room to bring your loved ones together

A place where the best of memories is created, engaging conversations take place for hours, and a room where you and your loved ones can come together and spend quality time — a cosy family sofa is a must-have in your beloved living room.

Sofa sets come in hundreds of different shapes and sizes, but looking for the perfect one can seem overwhelming. The best way to choose your dream sofa set is to not just picture the room, but the people too.

The first thing to look into when selecting your ideal sofa set is to measure the size of your room. Sofas too large can make your room look quite congested, whereas sofas too small can make the appearance of your room extremely minimalist and isolated. These major flaws will greatly hinder the process of creating a warm, pleasant feel to your living room, so be careful!

To create a homely, welcoming environment, opt for the classic L-shaped sofa sets. These can seat from around three to six people (or even more depending on the size), and have a cosy feel and stylish look to them. They are the perfect family-friendly sofa sets to consider in your furniture hunting, and provide amazing lounging space. They are great for naps too!

You can even consider the sofa-cum-bed set. The homely feel and dual functionality of these sofa sets are perfect for both relaxing with family, and providing a sleeping area for guests if they wish to stay at your place for longer. These are guaranteed to provide absolute relaxation during vibrant gatherings with your loved ones.

Ensure that the mattress you pick is of high quality, as cheaper mattresses can massively reduce the levels of durability and comfort for your guests.

For rooms with limited space, placing 2-seater sofa sets is just the way to go. They do not take up much space and are great at creating a cosy, homely environment, perfect for family and loved ones.

Sectional sofas are also an excellent alternative, as they can be rearranged to your preference, and if you are looking for extra cosiness, consider purchasing sectional sofa sets with an ottoman. It can serve as a footrest, coffee table, or even an extra seat.

Avoid placing individual one-seater sofas into a distant corner as this can create an isolated feel, which is definitely not what you want if you are planning to bring the loved ones together.

Neutral, soft, and dark tones are ideal sofa set colours for family settings. They are both soothing to the eye and look less worn out over time.

A singular large purchase at once can sound quite burdening due to the naturally high costs of furniture. For an easier, less daunting payment option, you can consider an EMI (Equated Monthly Instalment). This way, you can make fixed payments divided through each month instead of a large purchase at once.

So, what are you waiting for? Grab your catalogue and create your dream living room that your loved ones are sure to adore!

By Adiba IslamPhoto: Hatil