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Slaying the LOOK

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#FYI

Want to help stray animals? Here's how you can make a real impact

Hidden among Dhaka's crowded streets are the stray animals seeking shelter, food, and most of all, a feeling of safety and affection. With the upcoming winter days, one can only imagine how much more vulnerable these poor creatures will be. Their one hope of making it through these tough times are at the hands of a human.

It also doesn't make it easier that stray animals are more prone to abuse and neglect, given how overlooked they are by society. This leaves most animal lovers wondering how we can play out part in making their lives easier. Whether you're a cat or dog person looking for ways to help out our furry friends in the winter cold, here are a few ways you can aid them and make a change!

Provide Them with Food and Water

The dry, cold temperatures will leave most stray animals dehydrated. Carrying a bottle of water with you to feed them as you go

by your day is the easiest way to provide them some temporary relief in this weather. You can also leave a bowl of fresh water for them to drink from, which can also create a bond of trust if done regularly.

Creating a trustworthy relationship with stray animals by feeding them with small snacks and food is also a great way to not just help them out, but to also brighten your mood. This can also serve as a great outdoor activity with family and friends!

Make sure, however, that the food you provide them with is safe for consumption for both cats and dogs. For example, chocolate, grapes, and walnuts are few foods which are extremely toxic for cats and dogs to consume. Never go about feeding them with such food, as it can be fatal.

Adopt Them

If it is within your capacity, and you are well equipped with the resources to care for a pet, the best way to support a stray animal is to adopt them! Many stray animals seek a comfortable shelter in the midst of the intense cold, and adoption can give them this wonderful opportunity.

If this option does not sound possible, you can always seek the internet to search for any trustworthy individuals looking to care for a furry friend, or talk to anyone in your circle who may be interested. Many stray animals wander around our streets, so being able to take them in and care for them in a safe environment can not only improve their lives, but our community as a whole.

Make sure the stray animal you're choosing to adopt is safe and sound. You must take them to a vet to check for any serious injuries and/or diseases they may have accumulated in their time on the streets, and ensure they are vaccinated.

Raising a pet is a serious task, so if you make the decision to care for a stray animal, make sure you're prepared for the responsibilities that come with it. Your adopted pet will be eternally grateful for the compassion you show them by caring for them.

Take Action Against Abuse

Unfortunately, animal abuse is rampant within the streets and is heavily overlooked as stray animals are often not given the same level of attention as regular pets. But this needs to change. Stray animals are worthy and deserving of our care and time, and one way we can show them grace and kindness is by protecting them from abuse.

If you come across a stray animal being targeted, make an effort to stop the attack and get the animal to safety. Report the attack to any local authorities, and ensure the community is aware of the incident.

The best way to spread the message is of course, through social media. The internet is the best place to get the word out, whether it is through a video or a short post detailing the incident. Many animal lovers and others alike will be notified of such incidents, and it is also a great learning tool for people seeking knowledge on animal care and stray animals in general.

By Adiba Islam
Photo: Collected

#ARCHITECTURE

Baitul Mamur Jam-e-Mosque: A prayer space amidst the greenery of Lakshmipur

Located amidst a lush landscape, the Baitul Mamur Jam-e-Mosque is a captivating architectural landmark in Lakshmipur. The mosque stands as an iconic structure, as its unique arched roof catches the eye of passers-by. Since its completion, the mosque has garnered attention from local people, and it has become a popular spot for religious congregations.

"At first, the building sparked curiosity, as a vault-like form was a new sight in the region," reflected Kazi Fida Islam, the principal architect of Kazi Fida Architects (KFA) and the lead architect of the mosque. "However, upon completion, it has been widely appreciated. Many were drawn to its distinctive presence in the village and gathered here to offer a prayer, eventually transforming it into a local landmark."

"Choosing a simple rectangular block as a form preserved the geometric purity as it stands out against the tranquil landscape of Lakshmipur," commented Fida Islam.

Stepping inside, one finds the mosque to be a free-flowing space where devotees of Mohadevpur village gather and find themselves in an ambient atmosphere. The column-free interior allows the space to unfold as one continuous volume, which inspires a contemplative state of mind for the worshippers.

"A continuous spatial flow evokes a sense of infiniteness and eternal faith," added the architect.

The longstanding practice of praying in congregation is deeply embedded in Islam. Subtle features like round and edgeless corners make the space blend with the user's psyche while effortlessly merging with the greenery of the surroundings. For many visitors, this openness feels refreshing and peaceful.

"To some extent, the experience of a moment is invariably shaped by architecture. A meditative space must be unconfined, avoiding any sense of claustrophobia," Kazi Fida Islam reiterated. For him, religious architecture must create room for contemplation.

In his opinion, design and architecture should be tied to nature in all its functions. The connection with the surroundings, like the movement of the sun, the wind, and all elemental forces defining time and space, inspires users to engage in everyday activities with greater focus and meaning. This philosophy guided the spatial and environmental decisions behind the mosque, which was commissioned by Farhad Chowdhury Nehal.

Architect Kazi Fida Islam is currently practising in Dhaka, and emphasises the use of raw materials like concrete, metal, and lightweight structures that embody simplicity and minimalism. The mosque also features concrete for its structural stability and durability.

"Ample daylight flows into the prayer hall and the openings in north-south directions," he explained. This passive strategy reduces reliance on mechanical cooling.

One of the defining gestures of the mosque is the transparent east — west facade, allowing light to travel across the prayer hall and extending the sense of spatial continuity. For anyone offering prayer inside the hall, the openness gently establishes a feeling of infiniteness.

"The prayer space experiencing the openness in front, embodied as a facade, is the threshold symbolising transcendence of one's inner journey," observed Kazi Fida Islam. A pond along the west side helps temper heat from the afternoon sun, while new plantations of local species is planned so that they grow naturally and shade the mosque through the hotter months.

"Whether through natural elements or innovative architectural solutions, we wanted to create a seamless connection between nature and people," remarked Fida Islam. "We believe the influence of nature can outweigh the technical barriers and enrich one's spiritual experience," concluded the architect.

By Tasmiah Rahman
Photo: Asif Al Aziz Pritom, Julkarnain

#LIFEHACKS

The struggle for authenticity in Dhaka's professional world

Growing up, when I shared some of my parents' stories with my peers, I soon realised not everyone in Dhaka shared their experiences, especially their freedom of expression.

Much like any other city, Dhaka too is divided into its many bubbles based on financials and belief systems. When I entered the workforce in my twenties, I realised it applied to my experiences in the workplace as well. This is mostly because of the Arts and Humanities background I come from, if you know one, you know them all.

I learned to accept that relationships within some of these circles remained quite the utopia when others outside of it faced a different reality. It dawned on me that progressive bubbles have a tendency to gate-keep, almost everywhere.

In my professional capacity, I have tried to challenge that attitude and hold those gates, wide open. Someone I admire professionally once said, you do not have to be in a leadership role to lead. You can lead from any position.

As I spread out my wings across the globe, working in various settings, I realised how true this was and how the influence could flow bottom-up, as much as it trickles top-down.

Here are some ways I have seen this in action.

People pleasing leading nowhere

One of the well-known tactics used in "deshi workplaces" is the art of flattery. Have I seen it work? Yes, of course. Have I dabbled into it from time to time? When I was younger perhaps, yes. Have I seen it continuing to work over time? No!

The most unsuccessful part about people pleasing is that it can never gain you real respect in the eyes of the person you please. Once you lose respect by being ingenuine, it's a treacherous road to recovery and despite hundred fan followers, you might find it challenging to respect yourself again.

Overtime as well, you will find you have to keep repeating this behaviour till one day it eventually wears its charm off.

The false urgency

Unless you work in an emergency unit and you are physically and emotionally trained to operate under stressful circumstances, nobody should be able to pressurise you into action.

Let's face it, getting something done quicker actually requires focus and concentration and minimal disruption, not speed. A good quality project is a product of creative energy and deep reflection, not a strategy that's developed in survival mode.

The world is full of trigger-happy leaders right now who believe in quick action. My feminine wisdom would rather like to see them all in a rocking chair, knitting beautiful sweaters. Because that's the decorum that makes for a true leader, the ability to regulate emotions and remain calm, unrushed when it comes to making a decision that influence lives outside their own.

Identity crisis

After years trying to pinpoint the barriers facing most "deshis" in landing that authentic voice, I must admit I still don't know what the primary trigger leading to that incapability is. It applies to everyone along the food chain too, no matter the level of success, there's hardly anyone who's truly themselves. Especially, in their professional lives, we have cookie cutter version of employees occupying each level with nearly zero original thought.

In a labour-intensive work environment, this might be justifiable but in a cushy corporate position, people should be able to think for themselves, without looking for instructional leadership. This goes both ways, if an employee behaves as a responsible professional at the same time as the leader, they report to, treating them as an adult equal, the equation could look very different.

An employee is bound to do their work as per a signed agreement, then how this manager-team member relationship quickly turns into a principal reprimanding children in a school situation is a mystery.

Work-life balance

When I was growing up, an aunty in my neighbourhood who happened to be a doctor would be known as doctor aunty — a doctor servicing everyone they know. We often would not know their name. One might argue that it might be a good idea to know their names now, as there are a fair few doctor aunties in the world but exactly when and why being known for what you do for a living, stopped being cool, I'm not sure. But I have a hunch.

Between my parents and my generation, employment for people with a higher education started to replicate that of a factory, except with fancy amenities. Hordes of BBA graduates, marketing executives doing work that their parents till now can neither grasp nor explain. This was the start of an era where meaningful work and professions started taking a backseat.

Now whilst we can't turn back time or move away from the technology boom that is continuing to evolve, something that can be reinvented to avoid an easy burnout or from leading a life you constantly need a holiday from, can be a return to finding that meaning.

If you are working as a sales executive and you have the luxury to choose, may be choose a product or organisation you actually believe in. Again, not everyone has this privilege but if you do, let's not waste it. Identifying the purpose that you serve as a small piece in a bigger puzzle can be a game changer.

If you are walking away reading this thinking, what was new about anything I mentioned, it was not meant to be a TED talk or an attempt to place responsibility on self when the bigger problem might be a lack of healthy options to choose from. This was more a call to creative action for systemic change. A call to say, wherever you are, occupying whichever position, you have an impact on those working above you, below you, and around you.

If you have been waiting to witness a change in your workplace culture, and it has not come from someone else yet, you can bring these changes to life.

By Naaz Fahmida
Photo: Collected

Transform Your Laundry Experience with Advanced Technology

Comfort, cleanliness and convenience upgraded with smart tech

The arrival of winter brings back your favorite sweaters, shawls, jackets and blankets that have remained inside the wardrobe for months. However, these warm and cozy clothing items often contain dust, sweat and invisible germs that regular washing cannot fully remove. These hidden microbes can lead to allergies, skin irritation, seasonal colds or breathing issues especially for children whose skin is sensitive and immunity is still developing.

Winter itself adds new challenges to your daily laundry routine. Heavy fabrics take longer to dry, washing in cold water becomes difficult and there is always a risk of damp odors. For this reason, your home needs a solution that can deeply clean your clothes, remove germs and ensure freshness throughout the season.

A smart washing machine can resolve all these issues with ease. With deep-cleaning technology for thick fabrics, high-speed spinning for quick water removal and smart wash and drying functions, winter laundry becomes effortless, time-saving and hygienic. Your family stays safe, comfortable and wrapped in fresh, warm clothing.

Smart Wash Technology: The New Standard for Winter Laundry

Our modern washing machine is more than a household appliance; it is designed to make your everyday life easier and more comfortable.

Smart Wash Technology automatically senses the type and quantity of fabric and selects the ideal amount of water and the most efficient wash cycle. Even thick sweaters, blankets, and winter jackets are washed thoroughly without any damage.

With Air Jet Dry, your clothes dry much faster, even on cold days without sunlight

The Auto Balancer spreads the load evenly, reducing vibration and noise, which makes the washing experience peaceful and convenient even in small apartments. This balanced operation also enhances the machine's longevity.

The Speed Wash program quickly cleans daily clothes in just 20 minutes.

The Soaking Function softens stains to increase cleaning efficiency, reducing both time and effort.

The Tub Clean feature maintains a hygienic drum environment, and

Delay Start allows you to schedule your laundry according to your routine. Even in harsh winter conditions, thick and heavy clothes are cleaned easily, while the energy-efficient wash cycles help save both water and electricity. Altogether, this washing machine makes winter laundry a completely hassle-free, comfortable and time-efficient experience.

MYTH BUSTER: The Real Truth About Washing Machines

There are several misconceptions about washing machines that often mislead consumers. Many believe **washing machines consume a high amount of electricity,** but modern inverter technology adjusts power usage according to the load, reducing energy consumption significantly. Another common belief is that **washing machines use excessive water,** whereas smart load-sensing features ensure that only the required amount of water is used, preventing wastage.

Some think that **clothes get damaged in a machine,** while in reality, advanced wash cycles are designed to protect fabrics even better than handwashing. **Concerns about durability** are also outdated, as today's washing machines, built with PCM metal bodies and advanced auto-balancing systems, are rust-resistant, long-lasting and engineered for years of consistent performance.

Where to Find the Best Shopping Experience?

As a consumer, you surely want a place where you can find the latest technology, advanced features and multiple brand options.

That place for you is Transcom Digital. Here, you get the opportunity to choose the best products from various brands according to your needs and preferences. Transcom Digital is not just a place to shop, it represents reliability, quality, and long-term trust.

Transcom Digital ensures genuine products, dependable after-sales service, and complete convenience. With up to 36 months EMI facilities through 37 partner banks, your purchase becomes even easier. You also enjoy free installation, ensuring your machine is set up correctly from the very first day. Nationwide fast delivery and a strong service support network give you complete peace of mind.

So, without any delay, visit your nearest Transcom Digital showroom today, or shop online at: https://transcomdigital.com/

SAREE 2.0

Bold neo-styles to shine at every party

The most wonderful time of the year is here, and we lived to see this day! The much-awaited festive season is upon us, when Dhakaites eat, drink, and make merry, dressed to the nines in their finest threads!

Star LIFE Style

Speaking of dressing up, sarees are an eternal favourite for all Bengali ladies; being draped in a stunning saree imbues a Bengali woman with unmatched style, grace, and substance that makes her stand out in a crowd. An attire par excellence, sarees are appropriate for every event — be it a wedding, reception, dinner party, afternoon tea or brunch — there is a saree for every occasion.

And being a garment that evolves with time and becomes even better, sarees have been reimagined and reinvented by talented designers. Blending western influences seamlessly with a decidedly eastern attire that serves as a beacon of our culture and tradition is no mean feat. And yet, excellence has been achieved in that regard; the humble saree has been reimagined and adorned with ruffles, pleated like a gown, and sculpted like a statue to honour the old and hail the new in. It remains a saree in essence, but is modern and tremendously stylish! Fabulous in both form and function, the neo saree is a far cry from our conventional idea of it, but one look at it and you know that these new shapes are the present and future!

Black sarees are always sexy and sophisticated; add ruffles to it and voilà! Pair it with a sleek blouse with a sprinkling of crystals and pearls, and you'll shine like a star! A stylish hairdo with Marcel waves will beautifully show off those embroideries and sequins on the blouse, and highlight the pretty ruffles on your saree.

Emerald green is a stunning jewel tone that is very flattering to our rich skin tone. When a ruffled saree is rendered in emerald green georgette, the effect is pure magic! Let the ruffles do the talking and keep the rest of your look simple with an updo, glowing makeup and diamond earrings to truly shine and sparkle.

Who says statement sarees are only for the night time? Lovely pleated sarees in soft pastels make for great daytime attires, and is perfect for those brunches and tea parties you'll be enjoying this winter! A pretty pink pleated saree with white embroidery is resplendent and graceful. Pair with rows of pearls and a sweet updo that will show off the gracious turn of your neck, adorned in pearls.

Another mint green number is sublime, and will make you the belle of the ball with its soothing touch. A lovely pair of emerald and diamond earrings will complement your ponytail perfectly. Chic and sophisticated, these ruffled sarees are a must-have for the festive season this year!

By Sabrina N Bhuiyan
Photo: Adnan Rahman
Model: Tania
Fashion Direction & Styling: Sonia Yeasmin Isha
Wardrobe: Rose by Nizhu
Makeup: Sumon
Hair: Probina

#PERSPECTIVE

Animal cruelty goes viral, then disappears. The problem doesn't.

The image is difficult to forget: A mother dog in Pabna roaming from corner to corner, searching desperately for her new-born pups. Videos show her sniffing the ground and pacing in circles — unaware that eight of her puppies had already been drowned in a pond by someone who decided their lives were disposable.

The footage has spread across social media, followed by outrage and calls for justice. But anyone familiar with how this unfolds in Bangladesh also knows what comes next: a few days of noise, followed by silence. Another case replaces it. Another video pushes it down the timeline.

We have become disturbingly familiar with videos like these. So, what has happened to our collective conscience?

The psychology of cruelty

According to Dr Helal Uddin Ahmed, a professor of Child, Adolescent and Family Psychiatry at Faridpur Medical College, violence against helpless animals often stems from deeper emotional dysfunction. "There is a projection of one's own suppressed anger, frustration, and helplessness onto creatures who cannot retaliate. It becomes a way to feel in control when someone feels powerless in their own lives," he notes.

Animal cruelty, he says, is frequently tied to unaddressed stress, low emotional intelligence, and the inability to regulate impulses. For some individuals, harming an animal becomes an outlet — a deeply warped one — through which, they release their own internal conflicts. But psychology alone does not explain the scale of the problem.

Cruelty is no longer shocking, and that is the real problem

The mother dog's suffering is not an isolated tragedy. Not long ago, a five-month-old kitten in Dhaka was beaten mercilessly — an attack so brutal that its cries echoed through social media. When the owner confronted the abusers, she was abused in return. For days, people debated the incident. Then it vanished into the digital churn.

How did we get here, to a country where harming defenceless animals is not shocking, but expected?

The widespread circulation of graphic videos has created a paradox. People are more aware of cruelty, yet more desensitised to it. Viral content produces rapid emotional responses, but rarely long-term engagement.

Farhana Sultana, a PhD scholar studying psychology, describes the current mindset. "People feel bad for a moment, share the post, and then scroll to the next thing. The concern rarely turns into action. I believe that this short-lived engagement compromises accountability."

Without sustained pressure, perpetrators go unpunished, allowing the cycle to continue.

Legal protections exist, but are barely enforced

Bangladesh introduced the Animal Welfare Act 2019, which outlines penalties for abuse and sets guidelines for humane treatment. On paper, the law is comprehensive. In practice, enforcement is limited.

Many citizens are unaware of how to report animal cruelty. Law enforcement agencies often lack training or interest in handling such cases. As a result, most incidents rely on social media exposure rather than formal legal processes.

Mahmudul Hasan, a university student, points out, "We see laws being quoted online, but when someone tries to file a complaint, there's confusion about where to go and who is responsible." Hasan, a regular volunteer at an animal shelter, has voiced his frustration with the inadequate and fragmented infrastructure for protecting, rescuing, and treating street animals.

This disconnect between legislation and implementation creates an environment where cruelty can continue without consequence.

Street animals are part of our neighbourhoods. They scavenge to survive. They curl up on warm corners to rest. They do not exist to disturb us — they coexist with us. Sultana remarks bluntly, "Every religion teaches mercy. But here, we treat animals as if their lives don't matter at all."

The truth is uncomfortable: harming animals has become normalised in a society that claims to value compassion.

A case that should not be forgotten

The cruelty that the mother dog has faced is a direct reminder of an unresolved act of violence. The incident is recent, ongoing, and representative of a pattern that deserves attention beyond a few days of social media visibility.

If we want to reduce cruelty, we must treat these cases not as isolated emotional triggers, but as indicators of a structural problem — one involving law enforcement, psychological health, public awareness, and ethical responsibility.

Animal welfare is not a minor social issue. It is a measure of collective behaviour, accountability, and empathy. And as long as cases like Pabna continue without meaningful action, the question remains: what does this say about our society's willingness to protect those who cannot protect themselves?

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Silvia Mahjabin/Nafis Ahamed

#REVIEW

A TASTE OF NOSTALGIA: Chattograms's Beloved Liberty Falooda

When you walk into Liberty Drink House, or just Liberty Falooda as the locals lovingly call it, you'll enter a small, vintage-style shop frozen in time. The old-fashioned logo, the retro tiles, and the classic seating arrangements make you feel as if the 20th century never really left. It's the kind of place where people don't just stop by for a treat; they come to relive nostalgia.

As you can guess from the name locals have given it, the first thing most people order is the legendary falooda. And when you order one, you're served two glasses: a tall glass filled with the dessert itself, and another simple glass of water. It's just their way of doing it, and that hasn't changed in decades.

The shop is located on the first floor of Chattogram New Market (Biponi Bitan), a space crowded with shoppers every day. For many people, a visit to New Market is incomplete without a stop at Liberty for a chilled glass of falooda.

The history of this shop is just as fascinating as its taste. Liberty Drink House first started its journey in 1964, during the Pakistan period. Its original owner was a Pakistani businessman who introduced a unique style of falooda to the city, long before it became a mainstream dessert. After the Liberation War, in 1989, it was bought and revived by Hosne Ara Begum. She reopened the shop with the same menu and slowly rebuilt its reputation. Today, she remains the proud owner, watching over a business that has served generations.

One of the most remarkable things about the shop is that Abdul Malek, one of its very first chefs, still works there. Now an elderly man, he prepares each item with the same quiet dedication he had back in the 1960s.

Speaking of the menu, Liberty Drink House has kept its original list of items from 1964. Almost nothing has changed, not the recipes, not the ingredients, not even the serving style. The shop believes that the secret of their popularity lies in maintaining authenticity. According to the manager, Saber Ahmed, nearly everything served here is made in-house, except the noodles. "From the curdled milk to the jelly, everything is prepared fresh every day," he shared.

The falooda itself is built in four simple layers. At the bottom sits their homemade ice cream. Above it is a layer of noodles, followed by curdled milk — a unique touch that no other falooda offers, giving it that unique richness. And finally, on top, a layer of bright green and red jelly. It might look simple, but the balance of textures makes it unforgettable.

For those who aren't fans of noodles, there's an alternative: the fruit salad. It follows the same layered concept, but the noodles are replaced with freshly cut seasonal fruits. Refreshing, colourful, and surprisingly filling, it's offered at the same price as the falooda — Tk 130.

Back in 1964, a glass of falooda cost only Tk 3. Today, it's Tk 130, a small increase considering how many years have passed, and how the shop has stayed true to its original recipe. And that is what makes Liberty Drink House truly special. It's not just a shop, it's a small piece of Chattograms's food heritage, still alive, still cherished, and still serving memories in tall glasses.

By Jawwad Sami Neogi
Photo: Jawwad Sami Neogi

LIFE AS IT IS

WARA KARIM
Writer, painter, gardener, content creator
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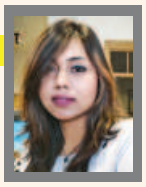

The Date of Birth dilemma

Is your actual birthday the same as the one listed on your birth certificate, national identity card, or passport? If so, congratulations! Because most Bangladeshis have an 'official' date of birth (DOB) and an 'actual' DOB. In rare instances, the 'actual' DOB matches the 'official' DOB. But why is this the case?

When I was a kid in the '80s and '90s, the common practice was to reduce a child's age by at least one year, so the child could appear for the admission tests of top-tier schools more than one time. If a child failed the first time, he or she could try again the following year.

In those days, when the private sector in Bangladesh was limited in scope and capacity, government jobs were the most sought-after. Decreasing age by one, two, or more years meant that individuals could apply for these competitive positions for a longer period of time. Consequently, once employed, they could stay in these jobs beyond the mandatory retirement age.

However, the secrecy surrounding a person's actual age can have a psychological impact. Even today, when someone asks me my age, I feel uneasy. I give a nervous smile and wonder whether I should tell my official age or my actual one. In contrast, here in the US, I see people talking about their age very frankly, as if there is nothing to hide. I wish I also possessed this level of frankness. But no, I can never be as frank as these Americans, especially when it comes to discussing age, because I grew up in a culture where we rarely discussed age, and even if we did, we always stated our 'official' age.

In our culture, asking someone's age is considered so impolite that many children never find out their parents' 'actual' DOBs. Our parents do not feel comfortable sharing their actual year of birth with their children.

A friend once asked me why we Bangladeshis lie so much. I said, "Because we grow up telling lies. We lie about our age throughout our lives. We lie every single time we utter or write our date of birth. Now imagine how many times we have already lied." I think that in this manner, we have normalised lying in our culture.

Healthcare

I know people who have their age reduced by as much as three or four years. When these people go to a doctor's office and state their 'official' age, they neither help the doctor nor themselves. For instance, age is important in determining the eligibility for certain tests and adult immunizations. For instance, colonoscopy or mammogram (for women) are generally recommended at age 45. However, if you're 41 years old on paper, your physician will delay recommending one of these tests for four years. This means that if you are not honest about your age while seeking healthcare, you might miss out on important life-saving medical tests.

Legal rights

Not having the correct age on paper also presents other challenges. For instance, you will have to wait to cast your first ballot or obtain a driver's license. In addition, you will not be able to sign contracts or make your own financial or medical decisions, if your 'official' age indicates that you are underage.

Nasir Uddin Ahmed, 62, is a non-resident Bangladeshi who lives in Sydney, Australia. Even though Ahmed is now eligible for the Seniors Card, a card that seniors can use to avail deals and discounts at restaurants, retail shops, and on public transport, he is unable to obtain the card because his 'official' age, that is, his age on paper, is 58. People can miss out on good opportunities and beneficial services when they are not truthful about their age.

In a country where birth certificates can be forged, and birthdates altered, and where lying about one's DOB is perfectly acceptable, lying about other things becomes just as easy.

Lying about the DOB is something we are taught from a young age and continue to practice until our last breath, and thus, our death certificates also display an inaccurate date of birth, a sad consequence of a long-standing custom.

By Wara Karim
Photo: Collected

#PERSPECTIVE

Domestic violence doesn't have a gender

I struggled for breath.

"Please… have mercy!" I pleaded.

My vision slowly blurred. I could make out only fragments of the shattered flower vase glittering nearby. I gulped a lungful of cold air, desperate to steady myself, but it was not enough. In a blink, unprepared, I was pulled by the lumps of my thick, black hair and dragged back to our room. I collapsed at the person's feet, sobbing and gasping on the floor.

"But..wha..is..my..faul..?"

"You're alive for no good. That's what your fault is," replied the hoarse voice.

For a few minutes, a stunned silence filled the room. I could not summon the strength to speak again. I was exhausted, overwhelmed, unprepared for this; at least not today, not on such a special day as our third wedding anniversary.

As I struggled to sit up, memories replayed in vivid flashes: the best moments of our life together, hand in hand, promising to stay for better or worse, in sickness and in health, until death parted us. I clutched my chest as my heart pounded uncontrollably. The pain felt too dense to endure.

We had known each other since sixth grade, and love blossomed over the years. We believed we were meant to be. Life was beautiful in each other's company.

My better half, my wife — had seemed infallible, understanding, and passionate. I was grateful for a perfect partner, until a year into our marriage.

I would have to pretend, I thought. I would have to play with my cheer, work my brain to hide the panic from my face. I would need to look my best to complement my charming partner around the several people who have always looked up to us as an epitome of love. So, I did, once again.

"I am content. I am happy," I whispered to my fatigued reflection — a small attempt to lift my falling spirits.

Descending the red-carpeted stairs, I spotted many familiar faces, my mother among them, radiant with joy. Her sight froze my insides, but I forced a reassuring smile. She must have felt relieved to see her cheerful child, unaware of the hurricanes beneath.

I hugged her tightly before moving on to greet more guests at our extravagant anniversary celebration.

Suddenly, my eyes caught the ruins of the vase I had forgotten to sweep away earlier. My pulse quickened. A familiar dread washed over me. What would happen tonight when we were finally alone? I prayed silently. May it not come into view.

Just then, my wife tapped me from behind. She glared at me with a ruthless intensity, that savage pleasure intact in her eyes. I was seized by terror. Oh no, she had noticed it.

My heart tightened. My only hope now was God. May He save me from my wife tonight.

Domestic violence is often spoken of as a woman's issue. Women face overwhelming rates of abuse around the world. But the conversation rarely includes men, even though they, too, suffer behind closed doors.

According to a national survey by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2022), 19 per cent of Bangladeshi men reported experiencing physical, psychological, or economic violence from an intimate partner at some point in their lives**.** In fact, the World Health Organization has found that about 1 in 4 men worldwide report experiencing domestic violence in various forms.

Yet, male victims rarely come forward. Shame, disbelief, cultural expectations of masculinity, and fear of ridicule keep them silent. Abuse against men is often dismissed as weakness, even humour, generally ignoring the trauma that might have been hidden beneath.

But violence is violence, no matter who endures it.

If we are committed to building a safer Bangladesh, one where women and children are protected with unity and compassion, we must extend the same humanity to men. No one, regardless of gender, should suffer in silence within their own home.

Every voice deserves to be heard. Every victim deserves protection.

By Zarin Khushnud
Photo: Zarin Khushnud

#TRAVEL

Sylhet's top 5 boat ride experiences

The air carries a subtle crispness and nature adorns itself in a delicate frosty charm signalling winter is here! And in winter, Sylhet unfolds its enchanting beauty in a new light. As the sun casts its golden glow upon mist-kissed landscapes and the rivers weave through a winter tapestry, there's no better time for a boat expedition in this north-eastern haven of Bangladesh.

To make your winter expedition more delightful, we present you a list of 5 boat rides that promise to take you on a journey of awe and wonder.

Ratargul Swamp Forest

The enchanting freshwater swamp forest of Ratargul, located in Gowain River, Sylhet, offers unique boat rides through its mystical waters to nature enthusiasts. Flanked by half-submerged trees and vibrant foliage, a boat ride through the emerald-green waters is nothing short of a surreal experience. As your boat glides through the narrow channels, you will be serenaded by the melodious tunes of exotic birds and occasional sightings of snakes and various insects.

Ratargul Swamp Forest promises an immersive journey into the heart of nature's tranquillity, and to get there, you can hire engine boats, commonly known as trawlers from Gowainghat.

Lalakhal

Surrounded by hills and Meghalaya Mountain ranges, the water of Lalakhal is adorned with shades of blue that defy description. A boat ride on Lalakhal offers a mesmerising experience as you float on the azure waters, surrounded by stretches of greenery and Lalakhal Tea Garden.

Winter should be a perfect time for you to visit. As there is not much water in this season, you will be greeted by calm and transparent blue-green water and the hubbub of migratory birds. With its crystal-clear waters and vibrant birdlife, Lalakhal offers a respite from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

The boat trip typically begins at Sharighat Bridge and to reach here, you can start your journey from Sylhet city. At Sharighat, you will find local boat operators offering their services.

Lovachara

Lovachora, a hidden gem in the captivating landscapes of Sylhet, invites adventurers to explore its beauty through a serene boat ride. Located at Kanaighat upazila, a boat through the Lova River will offer you a view of lush tea gardens and far-flung hilltops of the Khasia-Jainta mountains of Meghalaya.

To enjoy the boat ride at Lova River, you have to go to Kanaighat Sadar first. Upon reaching Kanaighat Sadar, you can take a boat from the local boat pier to navigate the Lova River, leading you to the pristine beauty of Lovachora. The boat ride itself is a mesmerising experience offering views of lush greenery and serene waters.

Bichanakandi

Bichnakandi, a hidden gem tucked away in the rustic landscapes of Sylhet, offers a boat ride like no other. The journey begins from Hadarpar Bazar Ghat amidst crystal-clear turquoise waters surrounded by limestone hills. The boats, which can be reserved from the ghat, navigate through the serene water, revealing secret hills and submerged bountiful greenery.

As the boat glides smoothly, the surreal beauty of Bichnakandi unfolds, creating a sense of otherworldly magic. The juxtaposition of the boat's gentle movement against the rugged cliffs and pristine waters is a visual symphony that will linger in your memory.

Tanguar Haor

Tanguar Haor, nestled in the Dharmapasha and Tahirpur upazilas of Sunamganj district, Sylhet is a natural wetland, adorned with lush greenery and vibrant aquatic life, offers a unique and enchanting experience for those who embark on its tranquil waters.

Local boat operators are available, ready to assist you in arranging boat rides to explore the breath-taking beauty of Tanguar Haor. To make the most of your Tanguar Haor visit, you can witness the local life and biodiversity of the haor by staying in a houseboat.

Whether you are a nature lover, an adventure seeker, or someone in search of tranquillity, the boat ride at Tanguar Haor promises an experience that will linger in your memory for a long time.

By Ayman Anika
Photo Courtesy: Farhan Alvee

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#DECOR

HOW NEWLYWEDS CAN CRAFT A WARM, STYLISH CORNER AT THEIR HOME

An essential milestone for a newlywed couple's life is designing a distinctive home décor that represents their preferences. Perhaps you would like to use a sofa with a vibrant design or an extravagant table as the centrepiece. Maybe your goal is to turn one area of your new house into a haven of comfort: a lobby.

Whatever your plans are, following the guidelines below will help you create a great lobby area in your house that you and your spouse will enjoy spending time in!

With subtlety and charm

Cosiness depends on the way you interact, as well as the aura of the place. Creating subtle, intimate seating areas with wooden chairs and tea tables may add warmth to any room.

You may decorate the sitting sections with a vintage or flowery pattern and wicker textures. Bold lighting and floral arrangements may also help to make the lobby feel more curated and comfortable. This strategy also allows the option to open up the space for bigger groups, if needed.

With chaos and colour

If you and your partner like expressing your chaotic energy, choose a more colourful and complex lobby space. Layers may be built around your little couches using a patterned knit blanket, a wool rug, a basket, and some antique trinkets. The space will seem lived-in rather than staged due to the combination of rough, smooth, and natural elements.

Go loud and daring with your couch colours. Use warm, earthy hues like cream or olive and textured materials like plaster, smoothed concrete, brick, or visible-grain wood to bring everything together.

With light and love

One of the simplest ways to change the mood of a space is with lighting. Your circadian rhythm will benefit from the addition of tea lights and lamps throughout your lobby area, especially those with softer or even amber bulbs.

Besides, you could add coasters and little side tables to your lobby couches so that you and your partner may have a cup of coffee wherever in the house. Having scented candles that enhance the light and atmosphere is always a plus!

With elegance and luxury

Oftentimes, couples prefer grandeur in some section of their homes. Suffice it to say, a lobby space that shimmers with gold accents in tables, intricate sofa designs, and plush seatings, speaks of regal elegance.

Additionally, you might add ornate touches to the room to give it a timeless charm. Some warm lighting, glass tables, and sleek curtains will intensify the golden glow, making everyone who walks through feel like royalty.

Unfortunately, you may have invested a significant amount of money on your wedding, and whatever décor you purchase to make your lobby area your personal canvas will also be costly. This is where the Equated Monthly Instalment (EMI) plan stands out as an ideal way to finance your home decor purchases.

With EMI, you can spread out your payments and avoid having to pay a large sum up front. You also get to stretch out your payments in equal instalments, which takes the guesswork out of the overall price. Nowadays, EMI payments are widely offered in many furniture shops. Needless to say, this will make your home décor purchases breezy and your lobby space cosy!

By Samayla Mahjabin Koishy
Photo: Hatil