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WONDER *Girl*

PHOTO: SHEIKH SURAIYA REHNUMA MODEL: AZMERI HAQUE BADHAN SHOES: CRAFTSMAN FASHION BAG: JUTTI HOUSE
FASHION DIRECTION & STYLING: SHEIKH SURAIYA REHNUMA MUA: TORIKUL HAIR: RUBY STUDIO & PRODUCTION: LENZKRAFT

#RELATIONSHIPS & FAMILY

Are Bangladeshi youth increasingly avoiding marriage?

Marriage in Bangladesh is never between just two people; it is always about two entire families merging into one. There are endless opinions and numerous expectations, making chaos the uninvited guest. These make marriage less like a happy ending and more like an anxiety attack wrapped in red and gold for many young adults.

"I haven't met the right person yet," Rafid, a fresh law graduate, shrugs. "Plus, I'm focused on my career now. I also want to enjoy my life to the fullest and go on tours with my buddies."

His mindset reflects a larger shift. Once, marriage used to be like a partnership; two people teaming up to get through life. Now, people are capable, as well as inclined, to do almost everything solo — rent, travel, and emotionally overshare online. When everyday life does not require marriage, romance has to work harder. But romance has become lazy these days. The "no strings attached" attitude has spoiled it.

So, some people get caught between ambition and love. "I can't spare time for dating," sighs Elma, a fourth-year med student. "But I wouldn't mind if my perfect match just shows up at my door one fine morning," she adds with a laugh.

Her comment sums it up well; the "career vs family" dilemma is real these days. It seems that while earlier generations married to escape uncertainty, this generation delays marriage because of uncertainty.

And uncertainty is practically a South Asian birthright. We grow up being told to be successful, respectful, available, adjusted, thin, ambitious, again not too ambitious. Weddings may last a week, but the commentary lasts a lifetime. Suddenly, everyone becomes a life coach, dietician, fertility expert, and career advisor!

No wonder memes of brides crying because they thought marriage was only about the photoshoot, only to realise they have to share a room with a man, are going viral. It is funny, but also telling. We desire soulmates, but are anxious about sharing cupboards. Commitment feels heavy when independence has become a badge of honour.

Esha, an assistant lecturer, puts it humorously, "I had four crushes this year, and all of them were fictional characters. They've set my standards pretty high, and I'm not bringing them down."

It is a perfect depiction of how imagination often feels safer than an unpredictable real-life situation.

"I have been in a relationship with a guy for almost five years now, we are like best friends, but I'm afraid things might change after marriage. Maybe the burden of responsibility changes a person, or maybe, staying with a person almost 24/7 unfolds the unknown side of them," Faria said thoughtfully. "I would just say, I'm waiting for the right time," she added.

For some, the hesitation may not be about fantasy; it is about the past. They do not fear marriage like a gamophobic might; they fear a bad marriage or replicating their parents' marriage. A dinner table argument that plays like a cautionary documentary can leave lasting marks. Growing up watching couples stay together "for the kids" makes marriage look less like romance and more like a long-term group project no one can escape.

"I had seen her on the very first day on my campus. She is from a different department," Aranya, a university goer gushes, "But I still couldn't find the courage to approach her. She seems, you know, what people say, very high maintenance," the hopeless romantic added.

Exposure has changed things, too. Where, once a mid-twenty girl or boy settled within the first one or two, maybe three proposals, today social media offers 500 potential options within five kilometres. So, we keep swiping, convinced something better is one thumb-move away. But this endless catalogue of choices has made us pickier, and ultimately lonelier.

But does that really bring us to a conclusion of how the new adults want to escape marriage? Certainly not.

Urmi, an independent young woman puts it beautifully, "It was not a love at first sight for me. But, when I got to know Enayet, I felt as if he was the one I have been waiting for all my life, he felt like home," she blushed, "Till date, he is the biggest supporter of my ideas, my cooking and me."

So, perhaps it is unfair to accuse today's generation of fearing commitment. It is not fear, it is exhaustion. They are tired of blind commitments. Perhaps, they are not against marriage as a whole; they are against the idea of a bad marriage. What they want is simple: marriage chosen on purpose, not just because it is expected.

By K T Humaira
Illustration: K T Humaira
Photo: Collected

#WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Elita Karim on music, work, and creative choice

She has lived many public lives as a singer, journalist, editor, and researcher, but music has remained the quiet, constant thread running underneath them all.

"Music is something like breathing," Elita Karim says. "It's not really an activity. It's a part of your system… like how blood circulates inside your body." After more than two decades of working professionally in Bangladesh's music industry, Karim no longer tries to define what music means to her. It resists analysis because it precedes intention.

Her musical journey began in the early 2000s, evolving slowly and deliberately. Over the years, her work has earned countless formal recognitions. She was named Best Singer by Channel i, received the BACHSAS Award for Best Playback Singer, and later, a Red Cross International Best Article Award for a piece written after spending three nights in Benapole, reporting from the ground. The range of those acknowledgements mirrors the span of her practice: performance, observation, and engagement with lived reality.

The work behind the sound

Karim is careful not to romanticise being a professional musician. "The dreamy image collapses quickly under schedules, travel, fatigue, and expectation," she says.

What sustains her is not spectacle but exchange – the moment when sound becomes communication rather than display. Her discography reflects that restraint. She has allowed time to shape her output. Her solo album Elita arrived not as an announcement but as an accumulation of listening, waiting, and learning.

She is currently working on a new musical project led by artist Rashid Khan, alongside musicians from different generations, including Bappa Mazumder and Partha Barua. Karim speaks less about the scale of the project than its process.

"I will sing a song written and composed by him," she says. "The lyrics are very beautiful…very sweet."

Before recording, she listens again. She checks the key. She adjusts. Creation, for her, is incremental.

Learning, resistance, and knowing when to step back

Karim is currently pursuing a PhD in Mass Communication in the United States. Her research grew from lived observation, particularly during the July–August movement in Bangladesh.

"One idea kept returning to me: resistance," she recalls. Noticing how people, especially younger generations, responded creatively through street plays, protest songs, graffiti, reels, illustrations, and digital cartoons made her feel inspired.

"This is a form of resistance," she says. "These are ways people respond when power is uneven." Her research-in-progress explores what she calls "Resistance Publics," examining how art, music, and visual culture create alternative spaces of expression when conventional channels are restricted.

As a musician herself, she approaches this inquiry not as an outsider, but as someone who recognises these forms as interconnected ways of speaking.

"The research I am doing is also influenced by the artistic works produced during the 1971 Liberation War, for example, S.M. Sultan's paintings (which were created later but reflect the spirit of '71), the songs of Shadhin Bangla Betar Kendra and how they inspired people, and also the short radio plays on Bangladesh Betar or that witty segment called Charampatra," she elaborates.

That same attentiveness to boundaries has shaped her decisions in journalism. Karim has been associated with The Daily Star for a long time, gradually taking on editorial roles at Star Campus and later The Star Weekend Magazine, periods she remembers as productive and fulfilling.

The conflict of interest emerged only later, when she became editor of the daily Arts & Entertainment page, a section closely tied to the industry she herself belonged to. Editing coverage of a field one actively works in, she realised, demanded a separation she could not fully maintain.

"I can't just give up my music," she says. Stepping back from that role was not a retreat from journalism, but a decision grounded in clarity and integrity, allowing her to refocus on research, music, and longer-term inquiry.

An empty pitcher

When asked about creative fulfilment, Karim does not offer a resolution. Instead, she offers an image. "The pitcher is still empty," she says. No matter how much she learns, it feels as though it is not filling, but deepening. That emptiness is not lack; it is possibility. The day it fills, she believes, the work will stop.

For now, it hasn't. And perhaps that is the point.

By Ayman Anika
Photos: Nafis Ahamed Khan

#FASHION & BEAUTY

Winter layering ideas that instantly upgrade your wardrobe

December is nearly over, and that means we are going deep into our winter fashion game. And winter can never be complete without the most reliable cardigan, poncho, shawls, jackets, and overcoats.

Gen Z shrivels at the idea of wearing a cardigan or a poncho to a party, associating both as 'grandma' wardrobe. But the style gurus have suggested a different take on the cardigan — comfortable, open-minded, and adaptable. And for the poncho – stylish, friendly and fun.

In simple words, layers are something that you reach for to spice up a look with minimum effort and yes, that also includes the cosy cardigan and the funky ponchos right beside the jazzy leather jackets.

STYLING IDEAS

Go for unexpected patterns, for e.g. zigzag, Aztec, rainbow etc. in the case of cardigans and pair it with fitted jeans or solid-coloured A-line skirts. You are good to go for the evening.

You can pair oversized sweaters with denim jackets or leather jackets and boots. And the cropped ones can be layered over solid-coloured shirts. To bring more character to the look, you can wear overcoats to seal the style and make it memorable.

ACCESSORIES TO GO

Cardigans, ponchos and sweaters always give out a Bohemian look, and to make it more defined, you need to add in silver danglers, nose pin, chic bracelets, and a long chain necklace.

Colourful bags are a necessity and it looks best when paired with winter layers.

SHOES

Boots, boots and more boots! You cannot go wrong with them. But still if you think it's something you are not ready to experiment with, then wedges should be the next best option.

Oh yes, there's also sneakers!

Winter is a short season in Bangladesh, but it is never the dullest. To spice it up further, this year, we request you all to experiment further with items beyond the traditional shawl. Bring back those granny cardigans and party jackets. Live it up!

By Fashion Police
Photo: LS Archive / Sazzad Ibne Sayed

Why olive oil should be your skincare staple

Within the constantly dynamic world of skin care, olive oil remains one of those products that has been a staple all along. Whether it is from the clay containers in the ancient home or the sleek glass bottles that reside in the contemporary home, a bottle of olive oil has always been a symbol of dependability.

Now, let's explore how you can incorporate this liquid gold into your skin care regimen.

To begin with, if you want to use olive oil as a daily moisturiser, then for optimum results, you should put it on your slightly damp skin. Just a few drops of olive oil heated between the palms seal the moisture. It is a total turnaround for skin that is dry or sensitive, no more flaky or itching skin. Moreover, your face does not feel heavy or greasy at all.

It is rich in vitamin E, polyphenols, and healthy fats. That means when you apply it to your skin, it gets a boost of hydration, protection, and a natural glow. These nutrients help restore your skin's barrier, which keeps out pollution, stops dryness, and calms down irritation. When your barrier is healthy, your skin looks smoother, softer, and calmer.

Olive oil can also be used as an efficient makeup remover. Unlike some harsh removers, it melts away stubborn mascara and foundation without any rough scrubbing. It does not mess with your skin's natural oils or clog your pores; on top of that, it acts as a temporary recovery layer.

Combating oxidative stress, one of the primary causes of fine lines and dull skin, is yet another innate nature of this oil. While it will not eliminate wrinkles overnight, regular use enhances skin elasticity, providing an even-toned, supple skin.

Honestly, olive oil is a prerequisite for nourished skin in winter. The cold air outdoors and dry heat indoors can strip moisture, making the skin feel dry and uncomfortable. So, olive oil becomes a comforting solution, adding a healthy, natural radiance without making it greasy.

Its rich emollient properties work to deeply nourish these spots, helping to restore softness and smoothness, while effectively preventing further dryness and irritation. For best results, apply it regularly to particularly dry areas such as elbows, cuticles, and heels, where skin tends to become rough and is prone to cracking.

Olive oil is also a fantastic base for homemade scrubs. When used in a scrub formulation that is gentle on the skin, it prevents discomfort because of its soothing nature that protects and smoothens the skin while eliminating dead skin cells. Additionally, it leaves your skin supple and prepares the skin to absorb moisturisers more.

When it comes to babies, parents want the gentlest and safest options of all. Baby skin is thinner and way more sensitive, but moisturisation is mandatory. That is why olive oil is a trusted choice for baby massages — no harsh chemicals, no strong smells, just pure comfort.

In a world where there are so many difficult-to-follow skincare routines and so many ingredient lists involved, olive oil can show people that there is actually more to good skin care, and that it does not always have to be so complicated. This can easily work, whether in the cleansing routine on a daily basis or in treatments.

By K T Humaira
Photo: LS Archive / Sazzad Ibne Sayed

A Bohemian at heart

In a world that constantly seeks to define women, actress Azmeri Haque Badhan chooses to define herself. This photoshoot captures not just an aesthetic, but a state of being. Through poetry, we explore the many layers of a woman who has learned to listen to her inner voice and live by it.

Spirited
She is her own story,
one that she writes every day,
turning her life's pages into
history.
She stops and ponders for a
while,
of days she was told she cannot
be.
A brief pause it is ---
"I am the queen of my own fate.
And there's no stopping me."

Beautiful
Where does beauty lie?
Is it in the twinkle of my light brown eyes?
Or in the soft twitch of a smile
I put up in front of friends and foe?
Neither!
It's in my confidence and in the softly
formed wrinkles
on my forehead and my cheeks.
They speak of years of experience,
strength and resistance.
This kind of beauty, I wish for all.

Confident
Much later in life
I realized, I could make choices
of my own.
To be happy and self-assured.
To be healthy and nurturing.
To be entirely selfish and yet forgiving.
To be a complete woman without the need
for validations.
They said this was a momentary madness.
I call it the beginning of the
rest of my life.

Photo: Sheikh Suraiya Rehnuma **Model: Azmeri Haque Badhan** **Shoes: Craftsman Fashion** **Bag: Jutti House** **Fashion Direction & Styling: Sheikh Suraiya Rehnuma** **Mua: Torikul** **Hair: Ruby** **Studio & Production: Lenzkraft**

Warming up this winter with noodle soup

There's something about winter that naturally draws us towards comfort food. As the evenings grow cooler and the days feel shorter, our meals begin to reflect the season. And few things capture that feeling quite like a bowl of soup with noodles. It's the kind of food that does not demand ceremony, yet delivers instant comfort. A meal that feels just as right on a quiet night at home as it does after a long, tiring day.

Noodle soups, in particular, strike the perfect balance. They are filling without being heavy, versatile enough to suit every palate, and incredibly easy to put together. From creamy and mild flavours to light, vegetable-forward broths or bold, spicy bowls, there's a version for every winter mood.

Here are three simple noodle soup ideas, each with its own personality, and each designed to keep things warm, easy, and satisfying.

CREAMY CHICKEN & CORN NOODLE SOUP

Ingredients

Canned sweet corn
Boiled and shredded chicken
Cornflour
Salt and black pepper
Eggs (optional)
Winter vegetables like cauliflower or carrots (optional)
Noodles

Method

Start by heating a pot and lightly sautéing the vegetables, if using, to release their natural sweetness. Add the canned corn along with water and let it come to a gentle boil. Lower the heat and allow it to simmer so the flavours meld together.

Mix cornflour with a little water and slowly stir it into the soup to create a light, creamy consistency. Add the shredded chicken and season with salt and pepper. For extra richness, you can drizzle in a beaten egg while stirring gently. Finally, add a packet of noodles and cook until soft.

The result is a comforting, creamy bowl that feels indulgent yet wholesome—perfect as a full meal on its own.

CLEAR VEGETABLE NOODLE SOUP

Ingredients

Mixed vegetables (carrots, beans, cabbage, cauliflower)
Garlic (optional)
Salt and white or black pepper
Soy sauce (optional)
Noodles

Method

In a pot, lightly sauté garlic if using, then add the chopped vegetables and stir briefly. Pour in water and let the soup come to a boil before reducing it to a gentle simmer. Season with salt and pepper, and add a dash of soy sauce if you prefer a deeper savoury note.

Once the vegetables are tender but still vibrant, add the noodles and cook until just done. This clear soup is light, refreshing, and deeply comforting; ideal for days when you want something warm without heaviness.

SPICY TOMATO NOODLE SOUP

Ingredients

Tomatoes (fresh or canned)
Onion
Garlic
Red chilli flakes or green chillies
Salt and pepper
Tomato ketchup or sauce (optional)
Noodles

Method

Start by sautéing the onion and garlic until soft and fragrant. Add tomatoes and cook until they break down into a rich base. Stir in chilli flakes or fresh chillies for heat, then season with salt and pepper. Add water and allow the soup to simmer so the flavours intensify.

For a slightly tangy finish, a spoonful of tomato ketchup or purée works beautifully. Drop the noodles in the noodles and cook until tender. The final bowl is bold, spicy, and deeply satisfying —perfect for chilly evenings when you're craving something with a kick.

Winter comfort food should feel soothing, not stressful. And on most days, spending hours in the kitchen simply isn't realistic. That's where trusted pantry staples come in.

Instead of making everything from scratch, combining ready soup bases and instant noodles with a few fresh ingredients can cut your cooking time to less than half, without compromising on flavour or comfort.

With the wide range of Maggi noodles and soups, it's easy to build these warming bowls quickly, letting you focus less on the process and more on enjoying the moment. Regardless of whether your palate is spicy or mild, comfort this winter will come in a warm bowl, on a quiet evening, and with the simple pleasure of food that feels just right.

By Nusrath Jahan
Photo: Collected

#REVIEW

WHERE LAUGHTER FIGHTS FOR AIR
Dhaka's Standup Comedy Scene

Back in 2024, post-revolution, the stand-up scene in Bangladesh buzzed with electricity. Mics crackled on quotas, curfews, and this chaotic city. Comedy clubs packed crowds, while YouTube specials hit millions of views. Those hits landed on OTT platforms, signalling a fresh dawn. Regulars like Amin Hannan, Ahmed Ashik, Akhlaq Siddiqui, and Mahedi Toru ruled the stage.

However, that energy has now faded. Audiences dwindle, venues disappear, and the scene wobbles on repetition, exclusion, and that mix of conservative and societal judgment. Naveed's Comedy Club (NCC), the pioneer and only dedicated spot, a hub for open mics and gigs, recently closed its longtime location. Rents are higher than ticket sales.

Organisations like Stand Up Dhaka (SUD) keep things alive in borrowed spaces, restaurants and university auditoriums. But it's sporadic, volunteer-driven, and hard to sustain. Big names stay afloat with corporate gigs, tours, YouTube, TEDx, while rookies rely on open mics and small gigs where they recycle old material.

Women in comedy? Scarce. Women like Sara Zaman emerge as a rare voice in a male-dominated industry. She started a decade ago in Melbourne and, post-pandemic, ruled NCC and SUD spaces. She felt inspired by Taylor Tomlinson, Sindhu Vee and Jeff Acuri.

"The scarcity isn't because women aren't funny. It's about access, safety and representation. Female comedians are held to different standards; even posting a reel can trigger comments focusing on appearance rather than the content itself. Often, fuelled by societal and internalised misogyny, making it feel like we have to work twice as hard to prove ourselves," said Sara Zaman.

When meeting and talking to performers like Ahmed Ashik, Sara Zaman, Akhlaq Siddiqui, and Mahedi Toru, we got several insights into what's going wrong. They have different ideals in standup. Different ideals shape different comedians, from which they generate different sets for their stand-up comedy.

Started in 2008 in the UK, later performing in Singapore and Canada, and now over a decade in Bangladesh, Ahmed Ashik is one of the longest-running and loudest Chatgaiyas,. He works on his writing, unlike the repetitive jokes in the industry. He admires George Carlin, Richard Prior, and Lois CK. No matter what the naysayers say, Ashik has high praise for the live audience of Bangladesh's stand-up comedy.

"The live audience is brilliant. They are flexible, liberal, and open to ideas. They allow you to go anywhere you want, and it doesn't even require laughing gas," he said.

English comedy in Bangladesh has been prevailing with young guns like Akhlaq Siddiqui, who started after his A Levels, left and came back for the love of it and has been consistent with his unique enunciation.

He looks up to Chris Rock, Adam Sandler, and Dave Chappelle. He credits his family's love for art to his career in music, voice acting and standup comedy, and thus understands why the lack thereof is in the careers of his colleagues.

"In a South Asian context, we were taught not to be ourselves. We are hardwired not to be us. There are so many layers of unlearning you have to do to be yourself, just so you can be better at speaking, better at projecting," said Akhlaq Siddiqui.

Mahedi Toru remains a rare example who found out about what standup comedy is in Bangladesh, watched shows regularly and bravely went up one day for an open mic. Then, several months of open mics, feature shows later, in just two years, he's a headliner for all shows he performs in.

Mahedi Toru said, "The joke often gets highlighted more than the serious issue the joke is about. Shouldn't more importance and attention be given to serious issues?"

Economy bites, inflation stings, "stability" brings subtle censorship of conservative audiences. Audiences are still reluctant to go out and laugh at certain issues. So, they dim the lights and focus the light on the comedian so the audience feels it's okay to laugh in a public setting amidst strangers. Once they start, there's no stopping them.

Dhaka's stubbornness breeds hope. Stand Up Dhaka's inclusive, accessible model could lead: all-gender mics, new faces, punches upward. The revolution proved laughter's power; if Naveed's Comedy Club finds a new spot, or Stand Up Dhaka grows with investments and collabs, a rebound is possible.

By Ajwadul Islam Khan (Nafis)
Photo: Courtesy

#FYI

CAN YOU ENJOY YOUR FIRST SALARY and still save for the future?

The feeling of the first pay cheque is something one would say is universal. The instant dopamine hit, the feeling of all the work being worth it, the eagerness to tell your peers about it, and most importantly, the eagerness to spend it. After all, money is meant to be exchanged for other commodities, but spending it recklessly in the early stages of life can have some dire impacts in the later stages. As money comes in, people often begin to spend far more than they should, and this is where the first mistake happens.

LIFESTYLE INFLATION

Let us think of our lifestyle as a balloon, and money is the air we put into it. The more air the balloon has, the higher it will fly, the more luxuries it will experience, but a time will come when the balloon can take no more air, and eventually, it will burst, and so will the inflated lifestyle.

Human beings in general have an inclination towards nicer things in life, and it is totally normal to spend towards but what is not normal is squandering almost all of the income and spending way more than one should.

"Everything in life does not have to be upgraded at once. Take one thing at a time and build up your life slowly," said Tasmin Islam Esha, a 27-year-old service holder, as she shared how she was able to get over these exact spending mistakes of her early corporate years.

"Income should be divided into percentages. 30 per cent to savings, 20 per cent to investments, 10 per cent in emergency funds, and the rest can be enjoyed," she added.

This aligns us with our second mistake.

NOT STARTING TO SAVE AND INVEST EARLY

Every financial book, every financial guru, and every mentor has always preached about starting your savings and investing journey early. There seems to be a reason for that as well.

Every small investment made during the age bracket of 25 to 35 has the potential to grow significantly over time, as the investment matures.

While young, a typical person has the least responsibilities and has a long time ahead to invest, hence this period is called the golden period of investing, but ironically, that is the period of adventure as well, the period of going on that Cox's Bazar trip, buying the latest iPhone, and exploring the beautiful country.

"My peers who invested at a young age are financially free now while almost everyone else is living paycheck to paycheck," observed Golam Rabbani, a veteran in the professional marketplace sharing his insights pointing out that investing early is the easiest way to earn financial freedom.

Rabbani also emphasised delayed gratification. "Young people have to learn to sacrifice early to get benefits later on."

Most people either spend recklessly in cash or use credit, which leads us to the third major mistake.

CONFUSING CREDIT AS INCOME

For most people, the first time they open a bank account is when they start earning, and at this time, they are exposed to the concept of credit cards. To the naked eye, they might seem harmless, to some it might seem as extra income but few missed payments here and there, and that is when regret sets in.

"Credit should be used very smartly as it is a tricky thing, especially for the youth," warns Zakaria Ahmed, a banker who has worked in the industry for several years.

Fresh graduates couple their existing income with credit and tend to buy things out of their income bracket, and then to pay back that amount, take in more loans and hence fall victim to a vicious downward spiral.

The solution is simple, according to Zakaria, "Do not use credit cards on large purchases, use a small amount monthly and do not delay monthly payments, this will help everyone to maintain a healthy credit score too."

All of the mistakes pointed out above are common and very easy to make, but they are also very easy to avoid.

The feeling of earning money for the first time is golden, but one thing to remember is that money will be important in the later stages of life as well and it is at this young age that people need to start organising and building their life, also while having fun.

One thing to remember is that at the end of the day, life is all about balance.

By Mehdi Islam Mahi
Photo: Collected

#CHECK IT OUT

5 simple ways to overcome the fear of public speaking

Even the most fluent speakers with a way of painting pictures with their words have difficulties speaking in front of a group of people, be it small or large. Formally and medically known as glossophobia, this common fear can go beyond just being nervous to talk to an audience; a racy heart and sweaty palms triggered by our flight-or-fight response.

Just as scary as it may be, it is just as easy to beat your fear of speaking in public by just practicing some simple steps and keeping in mind that imagining everyone in the audience is naked might not always help!

ACCEPTANCE

To get over the fear you have to first accept that fear is a natural response generated when speaking in public. When we talk to a group of people we are attracting all the attention to ourselves, thus making us vulnerable and subject to judgement.

Fear is a very natural reaction and our nervous system's protective mechanism and the best way to go about it is accepting. Accepting that it is okay to feel this way. There's no need to judge yourself when you experience this, but instead, simply learn how to manage this fear.

REFOCUS YOUR BRAIN RIGHT BEFORE YOU SPEAK

You are the most vulnerable right before you speak. Your mind going off in the back wondering 'What if I fail?' 'What if I make a fool of myself?' 'Everyone is judging me'. This is the exact moment you are to refocus your brain and bring it back to what you are going to open with.

Many go for a bite-size story, sharing the beginning of their journey, or even an interactive exchange with the audience. Telling and convincing your brain it is not about you but the presentations and what it stands to change, create and explore with the audience. Redirect your thoughts towards the presentation itself

FOCUSING ON WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

This part is as simple as the header suggests; you must pay attention to the parts you can control. Such as being well prepared, knowing your audience, engaging with them, having confidence in body language, and a variety of tones in speech delivery.

All of these require your full focus and are things you can control which is quite plenty to keep the brain right on track and running. A major part of a successful presentation in public is your literacy command and the pact you have with your audience. Public speaking, like all, is a skill that can be perfected.

DON'T TRY TO CALM DOWN

In a clever research, Harvard professor Alison Wood Brooks asked people to give a public speech which would be monitored by specialists to see how the fear of public speaking affects their presentation. Clever in that sense, despite 90 per cent of the people said that the best strategy was to calm down in the face of public speaking. It showed that 'calming down' actually calmed one down to such a point where their speech in public had next to no effect on the public. The people who relaxed and spoke in front of a group of people were less persuasive and had no lasting effect on the crowd.

Instead of using 'I'm Calm', phrases like 'I'm Excited', 'I'm Ready' or even 'I was born for this!' gave people the boost that helped them deliver a much more compelling presentation. So, encouraging yourself is a much more strategic maneuver to direct both you and your mind to the ultimate goal.

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

As I previously mentioned, public speaking is a skill that can be perfected through practicing in front of a mock audience, in your room with the lights off, or even in front of a mirror to observe how you are perceived are all age-old but very effective ways to fight off the fear of public speaking.

The more you practice one craft the better and better you keep getting at it. And to quote the words of Elbert Hubbard (American writer, publisher, artist, and philosopher), who said, "The only way to learn to speak is to speak and speak, and speak and speak, and speak and speak and speak."

By Humayra Morshed
Photo: Collected

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#REVIEW

Pre-loved clothing

Where every stitch carries a memory

Dhaka is a city of memory and nostalgia, especially in winter, when familiar visions from the past surface. Across its roads, lanes, and markets, the city quietly rewrites the biography of pre-loved clothing.

A quiet intimacy is woven into these garments. A zipper remembers a winter in Beijing or Tokyo. A denim jacket holds the slope of another's shoulder. A sweater carries a lingering warmth. In the city today, these intimacies form a strange, beautiful commons of taste, necessity, and reinvention. What began as informal trade for survival has rapidly become a conscious fashion subculture and a living online economy — a language for rethinking waste, style, and value.

Today, pre-loved fashion stands at an urgent intersection of history and environmental consciousness, aligning with the slow fashion movement against capitalist fast fashion. It now carries multiple meanings stitched together: memory, resistance, sustainability, and sharpened style.

In Dhaka, you are immersed in a vast sea of pre-loved clothing.

Well-known locations include the New Market area — Gawsia Market, Nurjahan Market, Globe Market — and the pavements in front of Dhaka College. It appears in Laxmibazar, from Kobi Nazrul College to Suhrawardy College, in Karwan Bazar's Kapor Potti, and throughout Elephant Road.

In Uttara, it surfaces around Rajlokkhi Complex, in front of H M Plaza, and along Rabindra Sarani.

In Mirpur, it runs through Hope Market in Mirpur 10 and along Mirpur Mazar Road. It is found in Bongobazar, Baitul Mokarram Market, Farm View Super Market in Farmgate, and along the road from Ananda Cinema Hall to the Farmgate overbridge.

The largest centre lies in front of Sadarghat, stretching from Waiz Ghat to Laal Kuthi. Begun Bazar in Old Dhaka is also historically renowned. Beyond these, pre-loved clothing is scattered across Banani, Gulshan, Badda, Malibagh, Moghbazar, and Rampura. Additionally, it is available only on Tuesdays at the open space in front of Priangan Market on Elephant Road and at Mongolia Bazaar in Hazaribagh's Section Dhal, like a temporary weekly market.

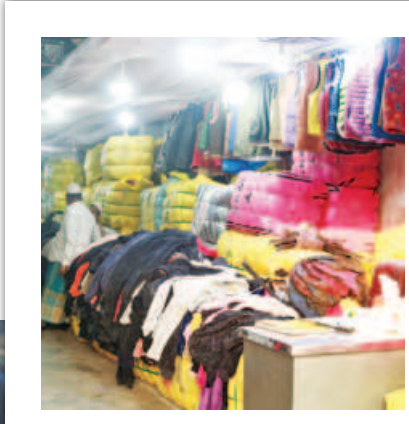
Pre-loved clothes are available not only in markets, footpaths, and vans but also in online shops on Facebook and Instagram, where each piece is dramatically photographed, precisely styled, and narratively described as an object of desire.

A faded coat becomes spiritual minimalism; a fraying shirt, poetic decay. Both worlds share the same ecosystem: one speaks the tactile language of instinct, the other the measured language of curation.

This clothing often makes a transnational journey. Garments from China, South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan arrive at Chittagong Port, are sorted in Dhaka, and carry hidden geographies in their seams. Alongside these, a significant portion of stock consists of brand-new clothes, often surplus from local garment factories or unsold stock from high-end stores, creating an ironic loop where Bangladesh, a major producer, distributes its own near-new excess.

Pre-loved clothing is not merely sold but reimagined. In tailoring workshops in areas like Nurjahan Market, Globe Market, Bongobazar, Begun Bazar, Mohammadpur Bus Terminal, and Town Hall Market, garments are deconstructed and reshaped: jackets are tailored sharply, denim is reworked, shirts become kurtis. Alteration is a creative dialogue between fabric and body, creating something personal from foreign cuts.

Dhaka stands at a crossroads, producing millions of new garments while absorbing the world's pre-loved clothes. This contradiction reveals the fashion industry's excess and inequality, and the brilliance of repair.



The ancient Bengali tradition of reusing fabric has formalised into a growing industry, accelerated by young entrepreneurs and COVID-19. Pre-loved clothing here serves three roles: survival, aesthetic exploration, and environmental instinct. It offers economic opportunity and sustainability, though rising prices risk accessibility. Its future depends on infrastructure investment and a conscious ethic that sees garments having a life before and after their owners. In Dhaka, clothing doesn't just end; it finds new life, teaching a city how to begin again.

By Adipta Hasin Rahman
Photo: Adipta Hasin Rahman, Collected