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Life

Style

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Unbound KAFTAN

UNDER THE OPEN SKY **P3**
PITHA-MAKERS OF DHAKA

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CHASING WINTER **P12**
PLACES TO TRAVEL

MODEL: HRITIKA ♦ PHOTO: ADNAN RAHMAN ♦ WARDROBE: ROSE BY NIZHU ♦ STYLING & DIRECTION: SONIA YEASMIN ISHA
MAKEUP: SUMON RAHAT ♦ HAIR: PROBINA ♦ LOCATION: SHERATON DHAKA

Bangladesh's Coldest Season Is Also Its Most Dramatic

January in Bangladesh has a funny way of inflating our egos. A few degrees drop in temperature, and suddenly everyone becomes an amateur weather historian, a self-proclaimed climate scientist, a folklore expert — or all three at once!

Come January, meteorology is no longer the job of the Bangladesh Meteorological Department; it belongs to uncles, tea-stall philosophers, rickshaw pullers, newsroom editors, and anyone holding a cup of steaming tea!

You will notice ordinary people, here and there, debating over facing “real winter” as if they had personally survived blizzards that logically never touched the ground of this region in recent centuries.

“This cold?” says a man wearing a thin sweater. “This is nothing.”

And then begins the storytelling.

The competitive memory of cold

Every January conversation is a contest. Someone mentions the cold. Someone else raises them in a colder year.

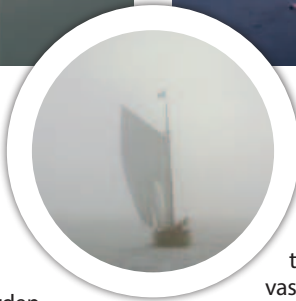
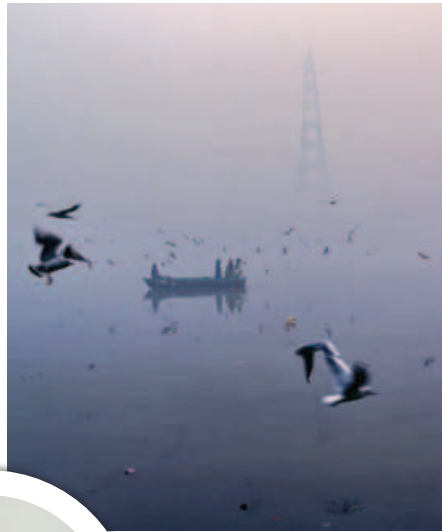
“Back in 1997,” announces Hamidur Rahman, a middle-aged man in a sleeveless vest, leaning as if this story has been marinating for a full year, “We had fog so thick you couldn’t see your own hand.” Before anyone can nod, an elderly man interrupts: “No, no. 1995. I remember because our pond water froze.”

Water froze? In Bangladesh? Of course! Because January here is not merely the coldest month — it is a competitive sport of delusional exaggeration!

Another uncle shakes his head gravely, making sure we all feel the weight of his disappointment. “You people don’t know real winter,” he declares. “In our time, we didn’t even have blankets or comforters. Just jute sacks or haystacks, and a fire if you were lucky.”

Now, that made me pause. If people once survived on hay, jute, and sheer stubbornness, do I really need gloves, scarves, and a long jacket at a polite 13°C?

Well... perhaps yes — because, despite history’s heroic tales, I do feel cold and my



toes are certainly not willing to negotiate with this cold.

The lost snowfall of Sylhet (That actually never happened)

Eventually, every January discussion drifts north, or somewhere near a hill, a tea garden, or memory itself.

In Sylhet, elderly people will tell you — sometimes quietly, sometimes dramatically — that there used to be snowfall a hundred or two hundred years ago.

Or in the Barendra region, some elders speak of white mornings and frozen fields. It sounds convincing. It sounds ancestral. But it is also, geographically speaking, almost certainly impossible.

Because Bangladesh sits in a humid subtropical zone. Even at its coldest, our winters struggle to reach the kind of sustained sub-zero temperatures required for snowfall. Yet, the stories persist, passed down with confidence and improved with each retelling.

Which brings us to the unavoidable question.

So, has it ever snowed in Bangladesh?

The honest answer is both yes and no.

Yes, if we are willing to go far enough back — far beyond borders, flags, and recorded memory. During the Ice Age, snow fell across vast parts of the planet. Given Bangladesh’s geographical position, it is reasonable to assume that this land, if it existed, in some prehistoric form, also experienced snowfall. But that was a Bangladesh without names, nostalgia, or anyone alive to say, “I saw it with my own eyes!”

No, if we remain within the boundaries of modern, independent Bangladesh.

There has never been a recorded snowfall here. The lowest temperature ever recorded in independent Bangladesh was 2.6 degrees Celsius, measured in Tetulia on January 8, 2018. That morning was cold by every Bangladeshi standard. People suffered. Headlines were written. But it was still not cold enough for snow. Because for snow to fall, temperatures must drop below zero — something our winters, despite their reputation, have never managed to do. Which means the snowfall of Sylhet

exists not in climate records, but in collective imagination.

Uno Borshay Duno Sheet (Meteorology, Village Edition)

Now, no Bangladeshi winter discussion is complete without rainfall arithmetic. This is our most trusted climate model:

Uno borshay duno sheet — double winter after a lighter rainy season.

Ask a rickshaw puller in Mirpur. Ask a farmer in Bogura. Ask a project manager staring at the AC remote. They will all tell you almost the same thing:

“It rained less this year? Just wait for the winter’s grip.”

Science, however, is less poetic and does not fully support this. Winter intensity in Bangladesh is largely influenced by cold, dry air masses moving south from the Asian continent, not by how generous the monsoon was months earlier. Rainfall affects humidity and fog, yes — but it does not store cold like rice in a warehouse.

But sayings survive not because they are accurate, but because they are memorable. And this one sounds wise enough to repeat.

Then why do we do this every year?

Perhaps this annual rewriting of winter history has little to do with weather at all.

Someone says, “It’s cold.”

Another replies, “This is nothing.”

Someone mentions their childhood.

Someone else upgrades it by a decade.

Every January, somehow, gives us permission to exaggerate without consequence.

It is not unlike our cricket nostalgia. Or food nostalgia. Or moral nostalgia. Everything was colder. Everything was better. Everything was tougher — and we survived.

Perhaps that is the point. January is not just about cold weather. It is about storytelling. About proving endurance. About claiming a past where we were braver, thinner, poorer, but somehow warmer inside!

By Jannatul Bushra
Photo: Collected

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#PERSPECTIVE



Meet the people who keep Dhaka's pitha tradition alive

Throughout Dhaka each winter, pitha vendors set up small roadside stalls with clay stoves and steaming pots, serving chittoi and bhapa to commuters and neighbourhood regulars. For most people, it is a seasonal comfort. For the sellers, it is a brief but vital window of income shaped by long hours, skill, and necessity.

For the perennially cheerful mother-daughter duo Khadija Akhter and Eeti, pitha is not just food. It is their identity, proof of a Bengali existence they take pride in. Primarily working as househelps, they sell chittoi pitha, bhapa pitha, dim chittoi, and chhita pitha, served with tongue-tingling shutki, dhoniya, and shorisha bharta.

They return every winter for practical reasons. Selling pitha helps them manage rising electricity bills and buy warm clothes for the family. Khadija believes food prepared with care carries its own reward. "Customers can taste the love," she says. "That's why they return."

Like most sellers, Khadija buys rice flour and jaggery from the market. What sets her stall apart are the bhortas, shorisha, shutki, and dhoniya,

prepared at home, hours before she steps outside. It takes extra effort, but she believes taste builds trust. On good nights, she earns Tk 400–500. Some nights are slower, but Khadija and Eeti stay put because going home empty-handed would not put food on the table or pay the bills.

Not far away, Mobarak sells the same bhapa and chittoi with equal dedication.



Helping him is his wife of 20 years, Kajol. Rickshaw puller by day and pitha seller by night, Mobarak sets up a small stall each winter to earn a little extra, enough to buy sweaters for their children and cover daily expenses.

If you ask them why they do it, the answers are simple. Bills do not pause for winter. Children still need warm clothes. Groceries still need to be bought. A rickshaw puller's income and sewing work barely stretch far enough in this economy. Selling winter pitha turns an existing skill into something marketable. "Who doesn't like a little extra money?" Mobarak explains. "And you get to make people smile."

Driven by the same necessity and love for pithas, Halima Bibi sits with a spatula and two clay stoves. She only sells bhapa pitha and tel er pitha as they are easier to make. Widowed and abandoned by her son, Halima lives alone in Tejgaon. For her, selling pitha is about dignity. "Earning by

selling is better than begging," she says. "Allah does not like beggars." Pitha, for Halima, is her foundation, the work that allows her to remain independent.

In Shaheenbagh, Morium Begum runs her own stall after finishing her day's work as a househelp. She arrives just after Asr prayers and sells through the evening, always smiling. Her husband was paralysed after a construction site accident, and since then, Morium has been the main breadwinner of the family.

She does not speak of complaints. Instead, she frames hardship as something to move through. "You can get out of any problem if you are determined enough," she declares. "Every problem has a solution."

Across Dhaka, stories like these repeat with small variations. Some sellers are paying off debt. Some are covering school costs. Some are trying to remain independent in old age. All of them use winter as a narrow window where skill turns into cash.

It is because of people like Khadija, Eeti, Mobarak, Kajol, Halima, and Morium that winter pitha, once fading from everyday life, still finds its way onto plates across the city. Often underappreciated and unseen, these sellers quietly keep a tradition alive, one evening at a time.

By Zawad Arif Arian
Photo: Zawad Arif Arian

Climate change isn't just environmental — it's a migraine risk too

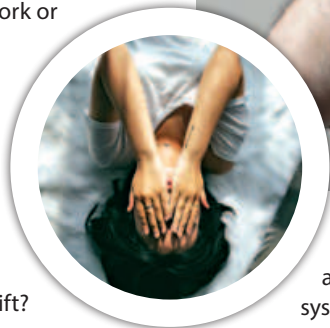
Migraines are not just bad headaches. They are a neurological condition marked by intense, throbbing pain often accompanied by nausea, and episodes of visual or sensory disturbances that signal a migraine attack.

Many people experience two to four migraine days a month, but recent research suggests that the frequency and impact of migraine attacks have increased significantly. A key finding from recent studies is that the severity of impairment caused by migraines almost doubled between 2005 and 2018, meaning more people are not just getting headaches, but losing productive time at work or school because of them.

Reports also show the condition is affecting men more frequently than before, narrowing the historical gap between male and female migraine rates that previously affected women.

So, what's behind this shift? Genetics, stress, sleep patterns, and diet have long been known triggers, but they don't fully explain why migraine incidence and disability are rising. Researchers are turning attention to environmental factors — and one of the most talked-about suspects is climate change.

Climate scientists and health professionals are beginning to see a pattern: weather extremes and atmospheric changes that come with a warming planet can increase the likelihood of migraine attacks. Sudden shifts in barometric pressure, swings between hot and cold, and more frequent heatwaves appear to be linked to migraine flare-ups in susceptible individuals.



Meteorological instability affects the body's vascular system — blood vessels expand or contract with pressure changes, and for some, that physical response can trigger a neurological cascade leading to migraine pain.

Temperature alone has also been implicated. Rising temperatures not only increase the risk of dehydration — a known migraine trigger — but may stress the body's ability to regulate its internal environment.

A study in Germany found that people who had suffered heatstroke were significantly more likely to be diagnosed with migraine later, suggesting that extreme heat events can have lasting neurological impacts.

Climate change doesn't just bring heat; it brings more abrupt weather. Storms,

rapid changes in humidity, and pressure drops are classic complaints among migraine sufferers. These environmental triggers don't cause migraines from scratch, but they lower the threshold at which a migraine attack happens.

A person might otherwise manage daily triggers well — stress, bright light, skipped meals — but when a weather disturbance is added to the list, it can push them over the edge into pain. Air quality is another environmental concern. Pollutants associated with fossil fuel combustion and wildfire smoke — both increasing with climate change — are known to inflame neural pathways and impair vascular function.

Poor air quality doesn't just aggravate asthma; it can trigger systemic inflammation that some researchers believe is linked to the physiological processes

underlying migraine attacks.

It's important to note that not every migraine sufferer will see weather as a direct trigger, and climate factors are only part of a much larger puzzle. Genetics still plays a role; migraines often run in families. Other familiar triggers include stress, hormonal changes, certain foods and disruptions in sleep.

But the emerging pattern is clear: environmental change may be stacking additional risk onto an already complex condition. Many patients report that migraine frequency and intensity seem to correlate with more erratic weather patterns — an anecdotal observation that researchers are now taking seriously.

So, what can individuals do? While we can't control the climate, migraine management strategies include identifying personal triggers, maintaining regular sleep and eating habits, staying well-hydrated, and working with healthcare providers to tailor prevention and treatment plans. Awareness of patterns — such as weather-related triggers — can help people anticipate and mitigate attacks more effectively.

The increase in migraine burden over recent years is real, and the factors behind it are multiple. What's different now is that scientists are looking beyond individual lifestyle and biology — and acknowledging that our changing planet may be influencing how often and how severely people experience neurological pain.

If climate change is indeed part of the equation, addressing it becomes not just an environmental imperative but a public health issue that reaches into everyday lives, communities, and health systems alike.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Collected

#LIFEHACKS

How to make life easier in 2026 without burning out

Every new year comes with pressure to optimise everything — work, health, relationships, routines. But the smarter move in 2026 may be the opposite. Making life easier is not about adding hacks. It's about removing unnecessary effort. When we stop treating busyness as a virtue, everyday life becomes more manageable.

Stop over-managing small tasks

Not every email needs a response. Not every item needs to be folded a certain way. Constant micro-management drains mental energy. Choosing which details actually matter can reduce daily stress without lowering standards where it counts.

Reduce digital noise

Group chats, work platforms, and social media create a false sense of urgency. Many messages do not require immediate attention. Turning off notifications, muting non-essential threads, and responding on your own schedule can dramatically



improve focus and calm.

Simplify health routines

More products do not equal better results. Whether it's skincare, supplements, or fitness routines, complexity often creates confusion. Focusing on essentials — sleep, movement, hydration, and consistency — does more than chasing trends.

Let go of "perfect" productivity

You do not need to optimise every hour. Productivity is not about constant output; it's about sustainable effort. Accepting

slower days without guilt prevents burnout and makes progress more consistent over time.

Make peace with a little mess

A perfectly tidy home is not a moral achievement. Designating areas for clutter and accepting visual imperfection can make your space easier to live in. Order should serve you, not stress you.

Be selective with social commitments

You do not have to attend every gathering or stay until the end. Leaving early, saying no, or skipping plans doesn't make you rude — it makes you honest. Protecting energy improves relationships instead of harming them.

Stop forcing enjoyment

Finishing books you do not like or continuing shows out of obligation adds unnecessary friction. Letting go of things that do not resonate creates space for

what actually does.

Travel slower, not harder

Trying to see everything often means enjoying nothing. Fewer plans, longer pauses, and flexible schedules make travel restorative rather than exhausting.

Accept imperfection as normal

Not every problem needs fixing immediately. Not every day needs improvement. Accepting discomfort as part of life — instead of a failure — reduces anxiety and builds resilience.

Ease is a skill

Making life easier is not laziness. It's discernment. In 2026, the goal is not to do everything better — it's to do fewer things with more intention. When effort is reserved for what truly matters, life naturally feels lighter.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Collected

#LIFEHACKS

Coping mechanisms of an average citizen in Dhaka

You know that sinking feeling of dread and anxiety that kicks in right before some major life event or an important task? The one which makes your mind work overtime, suggesting to you all the innumerable permutations and combinations of things that could go wrong? Most of us can relate to this, but, for the citizens of Dhaka, living in the capital city introduces yet another element into this unpleasant mix: unpredictability!

Nothing in Dhaka runs quite as it is supposed to. Transport can be scant and erratic depending on the time of the day, your area zip code, and various other factors out of your control. For instance, there are frequent street shutdowns/blockades that result from inefficient management in rallying. Especially since 2024, this has become a new concern in the daily lives of Dhakaites, the possibility of encountering risks or, at the very least, delays in urgent plans due to ill-managed movements.

There is no predicting when you might get caught up on the sidelines of a skirmish and become subject to mortal danger. I think of Siam Majumdar, the 21-year-old youth who never got to enjoy the short respite from work, never got to finish his cup of tea, when he became part of a senseless tragedy in a crude bomb explosion. Could he have ever foreseen such an event when he stepped out of work for a snack break? Could any of us, if we were met with a similar fate?

All of this is not to say that we face these events with resigned dejection. No, we Dhakaites have developed our own set of coping mechanisms, things that give us some semblance of control in our lives.

A biting sense of humour

Anytime the city throws yet another obstruction in our paths, one is sure to see



our particular brand of dark humour in full swing. Sarcastic remarks like “this is our jadur shohor” and “Living in Dhaka is not for the weak” are just some examples of the discourse you are bound to hear among your fellow Dhakaites in both offline and online spaces.

Among social media users, this is even more visible as Gen-Z and, sometimes, the millennials amplify this coping mechanism by prolifically contributing to the production and consumption of locally relevant memes and skits.

Open any comment section of a post on an absurd or frustrating event, and you are bound to see dozens of GIFs and comments along the lines of popular Internet slang and meme culture. We deal with absurdity or even buffoonery in our local spaces by dropping remarks like “we got this before GTA VI”; “absolute cinema”, and other such pithy things. We signal our disapproval or incredulosity through similarly meme-coded statements like “ts ain’t tuff” and “peak unemployment”.

We can go back and forth on how effective this is in terms of dealing practically with daily inconveniences, but that is beside the point. In a fast-paced city

where very few things are in our control, humour provides us the outlet we need to convert our frustrations into a widely communicable language and a space for asserting our voices, which usually fall on deaf ears in other spheres.

Constantly planning our next trip

Any chance we get at stepping back from the draining rat race, we grab it even if only for a bit. Our holidays are spent in either exotic holiday destinations or, at the very least, in other cities outside Dhaka.

Even young university students with little pocket change to spare pool their fiscal resources for short one-to-two-day tours in search of some respite from the city’s hustle and bustle.

Popular destinations like Cox’s Bazar get far more Dhakaite visitors than Chatgaiyas throughout the year, despite its proximity to Chittagong city. The same can be said for other visitor-friendly destinations like Sajek Valley in Rangamati.

Restaurant hopping to sample food and preserve friendships

In recent years, frequenting restaurants or cafes has become a legit hobby among Dhakaites. The middle to upper-class citizens consumes more international

cuisine than Bengali food and willingly fork out a sizable portion of their monthly income in the process.

Apart from offering the opportunity to indulge in other cuisines, restaurants have also become some of the few consistent spaces for socialisation. Think about it. When was the last time you had a hangout with your friends that did not involve any restaurants or cafes? You might be hard-pressed to find more than a few examples.

As someone born and raised in Chittagong, I can attest that the restaurant scene in Dhaka has significance beyond food. Here, they are the one reliable option everyone can agree on for a group hangout. And, why not? They do seem more convenient than planning the commute routes to your host’s house in a far-flung neighbourhood, and, hey, you get aesthetic pictures for your gram. Two birds killed with one stone.

Looking for the silver lining in our surroundings

This one’s for the optimists. Certainly, it would be a sweeping generalisation to label every Dhakaite as a sceptic, looking to escape the city.

Some would rather immerse themselves in the city and choose joy as an active rebellion against daily monotony. They people-watch during commutes and walks on the footpaths, assessing the faces and activities of strangers in search of stories. Perhaps, they throw themselves even harder into everything the city has to offer in terms of culture and art.

While verging on a romanticised view of Dhaka, this mindset is one of the more refreshing coping mechanisms, as it helps people to reclaim their vision of this city in spite of all its shortcomings.

By Sunehra Afreen
Photo: Collected



#FASHION & BEAUTY

Why kaftans are a timeless essential in BANGLADESHI WARDROBES



The kaftan has mastered what most fashion silhouettes struggle to achieve — looking refined while feeling effortless. Flowing, forgiving and versatile, it has quietly become one of the most reliable pieces in a modern Bangladeshi wardrobe. From casual afternoons and office wear to festive evenings, the kaftan adapts with ease, proving that style does not have to be complicated to be impactful.

Star **LIFE** Style

SILHOUETTE THAT WORKS

The enduring appeal of the kaftan lies in its lack of rigid structure. Designed to skim the body instead of hugging it, kaftans offer comfort without sacrificing presence. Wide sleeves, fluid cuts, and breathable fabrics make them flattering across body types and age groups, which explains their growing popularity beyond seasonal trends.

Long kaftans remain the classic choice, especially for evening wear or semi-formal occasions. Their length and flow create a sense of drama that feels elegant yet effortless. Short kaftans, on the other hand, are ideal for daytime dressing — easy to style, lightweight, and perfect for the typical Bangladesh climate.

In recent years, short kaftans have also evolved into co-ord styles. Paired with matching trousers or palazzos, these sets bring a contemporary edge to the silhouette. The result is a look that feels structured enough for outings and meetings, while still retaining the comfort kaftans are known for.

FOR CELEBRATION

What makes kaftans particularly relevant today is their ability to move effortlessly across occasions. Chiffon, georgette, silk, and muslin kaftans are increasingly being worn for semi-formal gatherings and weddings. Delicate embroidery, subtle beadwork, or carefully placed prints give them a festive edge without making them feel heavy.

For daytime wedding events, such as mehendi or sangeet functions, kaftans offer a comfortable yet polished alternative to traditional attire.

Belts, statement jewellery, and structured footwear can instantly elevate a kaftan look. A cinched waist adds definition, while bold earrings or cuffs bring in personality. It's this adaptability that allows kaftans to feel both relaxed and occasion-ready, depending on how they're styled.

ATTENTION TO DETAILS

Kaftans lend themselves beautifully to colour play. Soft pastels, earthy neutrals, and classic blacks remain wardrobe staples, but bolder shades — emerald green, deep red, royal blue — are equally popular for festive wear. Prints add character, but solid colours with light embroidery often feel more

refined and versatile.

Fabric choice plays a crucial role in defining the mood of a kaftan. Cotton kaftans are breathable and practical, making them ideal for daily wear. Chiffon and georgette bring softness and movement, while silk offers a richer, more formal finish. The key is balance — light embroidery and thoughtful detailing enhance the garment without overpowering its natural flow.

WHERE TO FIND THEM

One of the kaftan's biggest advantages is its accessibility. Simple cotton kaftans typically start from around Tk 1,500 and are widely available through various online pages and small boutiques. These are perfect for everyday wear and casual outings.

Kaftans made from chiffon, georgette, or silk can range from Tk 4,000 to Tk 5,000, depending on fabric quality, print, and embroidery. Branded options from names like Rose by Nizu, Klubhause and Aarong offer curated designs with consistent quality and finishing.

For those who prefer a more personalised approach, local shopping hubs like Banani Supermarket, Priyangan and Eastern Mollika remain unmatched. The real advantage of these places lies in their vast fabric selection — allowing shoppers to choose materials, colours, and embellishments before getting kaftans tailored exactly to their preference.

The kaftan has always been about ease, confidence, and individuality. It allows women to dress on their own terms, without compromising on comfort or elegance. Whether styled minimally or dressed up for an occasion, the kaftan holds its place as a wardrobe essential that works quietly, consistently, and beautifully.

Because sometimes, the most stylish choices are also the simplest.

By Nusrath Jahan

Model: Hritika

Photo: Adnan Rahman

Wardrobe: Rose by Nizhu

Styling & Direction: Sonia Yeasmin Isha

Makeup: Sumon Rahat

Hair: Probina

Location: Sheraton Dhaka

ELEGANTLY INTELLIGENT

SABRINA N BHUIYAN is a writer aspiring to elevate your thoughts with intellectually stimulating insights. She can be reached at sabrinanbhuiyan@gmail.com.



You will spot them everywhere — at all upscale parties, openings, holidays, weddings, receptions, birthdays, and everything else in between. Dressed to the nines in season's latest threads and made up beyond belief by the makeup artist everyone wants to get dolled up by but can't ever get an appointment with, these ladies are the denizens of the Dhaka social scene!

Usually moving in packs, their snooty noses turn up at the sight of a lesser mortal dressed in last season's kaftan or a dated designer handbag. Flaunting the latest it bag and diamond-encrusted watches, they sure look the part of well-heeled socialites. I will give them that!

One might argue that nothing is wrong with having a great fashion sense and affinity with designers' duds. In all honesty, there isn't. Who doesn't want to look their absolute best, especially in the age of social media when appearance matters the most?

And then an incident comes to mind that I had the misfortune of witnessing. There I was, at yet another sangeet, sipping *gur er cha* and enjoying my *bhapa pitha* while listening to a well-known Indian artist crooning away, when all of a sudden, I realised, I was sitting next to a pair of aforementioned well-heeled, chirpy little birdies (hawks more like!) regarding every guest passing by.

Snippets of their conversation came into my earshot (lest one accuses yours truly of eavesdropping!), which essentially was a discussion at length about who wore what. Regarding each lady present, they were

The hedonists of Dhaka



having a grand laugh about how some of them were, a) repeating old designer outfits, b) wearing 'inspired' dresses and c) worst offenders by their standards, wearing generic clothing!

Gasps and shudders ensued in varying degrees, which left me incredibly amused at first.

What followed after this policing turned my amusement into horror when I noticed them joining other members of their clique, pointing at some guests and laughing out loud at their poor fashion choices, much to my chagrin. And this was not the only instance such misfortune befell me, mind you. Time and time again, similar mockery has been made of lesser-dressed beings around me on various occasions.

Such is the pitfall of hedonism — in pursuit of the finer things in life, one loses one's head and starts feeling superior to others.

My darling readers, do not misunderstand me. At the risk of being stoned by some of you, let me clarify my stance.

In 2026, when all has been said and done, surely how one dresses and looks should not be the only marker of one's personality? Is it not high time we move on from such petty nonsense and start to care about deeper things like how kind a person is, what the good qualities they possess and how someone makes others smile?

What is it about some stylish women in Dhaka that the moment they spot a person dressed in simple clothes, their claws come out and crave blood? Have we become so depraved in our thirst to keep up with Indian and Pakistani fashion that our age-old Bangladeshi values of compassion and genteel ways are behind us?

Perhaps, in the era of late-night dopamine hits from doom-scrolling mindless TikToks, we have lost our sense of integrity.

Bangladeshis are known all over the world for being culturally superior, with a rich legacy of gifted writers, musicians, poets and artists and yet our

collective love for literature, music and art is dying at an alarming pace. We are slowly but surely, in our continuing struggle to look like the trending Indian or Pakistani 'it' girl, losing our uniqueness, our own essence.

In our relentless hunger and pursuit of appearing fashionable, are we losing our conscience? Or, maybe I am asking too much of the 'Gen Z', so engrossed in being woke that they have lost their sense of identity? Only time will tell.

In the meantime, let us enjoy all the *gur er cha* and *bhapa pitha* at yet another 'sangeet' while enjoying super hit Hindi and Pakistani dance numbers!

By Sabrina N Bhuiyan

**#FOOD & RECIPES**

Pineapple on pizza isn't a crime—or is it?

If you consider yourself a food enthusiast, then you surely are no stranger to the pineapple on pizza debate. While some refer to it as a culinary revolution, others describe it as a complete abomination driven by gluttony. So, today, let's delve into the controversy of melted cheese and tropical rebellion to understand why it divided humanity into two clans.

Hawaiian Pizza, the centre of discord, was first invented in Canada in 1962, topped with pineapple, tomato, mozzarella cheese, and a choice of meat. Since then, a group devoured it like a celestial delicacy, whereas others loathed its mere aroma.

"I just don't get what all the fuss is about. Why do people keep going on about mixing salty and sweet?" Anik, a 21-year-old, stuffed the last bit of Hawaiian pizza into his mouth and said, "I mean, haven't you ever tried doi-fuchka or salted caramel popcorn?" he grimaced.

Perhaps a sweet fruit over pizza is the source of all the hate. Or it could be that some people can't train their taste buds enough to tolerate the sticky bits bathing in cheese and tomato. The cheese melts on



the soft crust in a while. But the pineapple remains smug all through, oozing sugary syrup all over the pizza. Critics insist this is not just a topping, but an act of sabotage. Thus, they shoo the pineapple away.

However, those who scream "authenticity" are just fanciful, or what the Gen-Z would say "delulu," because pizza has already gone through numerous evolutions in the course of time. Stuffed-crust, deep dish, gluten-free, or cauliflower crust are not the ideas the people of Naples came up with. It seems a bit unfair how these are called culinary jazz, leaving the poor cheerful pineapple bits to all the hate.

When asked about it, Nancy, a

psychotherapist, took a deep breath and answered, "You know, I'm very, very empathetic, I don't care what atrocity you do with your food. You can go eat that custard; I won't judge you."

Meanwhile, the pro-pineapple rebels chime in by saying that pineapple on pizza represents how life should be — improvised, bold, and slightly irksome to the purists. They wholeheartedly believe that ordering a Hawaiian pizza, while ignoring all the eye rolls and comments on being a lunatic, needs guts. On top of that, when the baked pieces of sunshine touch your senses, the pizza slice does not remain just a treat; it becomes an experience.

Ayan, a software engineer, with a questionable number of pizza boxes scattered around his room, shrugged and said, "Pineapple on pizza is not a mistake. It's science. The acidity cuts through the grease, the sweetness crashes into the salt, and suddenly, the pizza isn't just food — it's this awesome balance of taste."

The war of words keeps on going, but some deal with it like mature adults.

Shahna, a self-proclaimed connoisseur

has had enough of it and said, "What truly fascinates me is the intensity. They speak about pineapple on pizza the way others speak about ethics or politics; with narrow eyes and raised voices," she shook her head in dismay, "Someone says, 'I'm just saying,' right before saying something extremely unnecessary. Meanwhile, the pizza gets cold; the real tragedy no one cares about," she added.

Between all these, the truth is indeed boring; taste is subjective. Some enjoy experimenting with flavours, while the rest are inclined towards the traditional palate. Neither side is superior, and neither of them has ultra-developed gustatory cells. It "depends," sometimes on the mood, sometimes on the company.

In the end, let's all have our food in peace — because life is already chaotic enough without putting a moral crisis on a slice of pizza. Just be sure not to order a Hawaiian pizza for anyone on a special day without knowing their preference, and you should be good to go.

By K T Humaira
Illustration: K T Humaira

#PERSPECTIVE

From self-doubt to Harvard: Lessons for dreamers in Bangladesh

A few weeks ago, I accepted my offer to Harvard Business School's MBA Class of 2028. It still feels surreal to even write this. But this journey didn't begin with an application. It started much earlier, in a traditional Bangladeshi home, with a question I couldn't shake: Is this all there is?

Like many Bangladeshi girls, I grew up with the assumption that my life would eventually narrow into a single destination: marriage. There is nothing wrong with that path, but for me, it felt like a life half-lived. I wanted more: to learn, to build, to contribute.

That urge made me restless. I questioned rules, spoke up when something felt unfair, and constantly struggled to accept beliefs that clashed with my conscience. It made me wonder, am I wrong? Why was it so hard for me to accept that marriage could be the sole purpose of my life? Only later did I understand that what appeared to be defiance was, in fact, an early form of self-awareness and curiosity about my value and purpose in my life, figuring out what and who I want to be.

In university, I finally felt normal when I found friends who, like me, were opinionated, questioned assumptions, were idealistic, occasionally stubborn, and deeply driven by purpose. We debated social problems, discussed everything from entrepreneurial ideas to programming language, and believed that defiant people like us could change the world!

That shared passion led us to an unexpected milestone: winning the regional finale of the world's largest student competition, HULT Prize, in Shanghai when I was 21. Since then, trusting my instincts and daring to "shoot my shot" became habits that quietly shaped my life.

Which brings me, years later, to Harvard Business School.

I will not write about test scores, essays, or recommendation letters, not because they do not matter, but because they are not the heart of the story. Nearly 15,000 people apply to Harvard Business School each year, and about 900 are admitted. What distinguishes them is rarely perfection; it is pattern — a consistency of values lived over time.

First, be willing to write and rewrite your story. It helps to be willing to go against the flow, be someone unafraid of unfamiliar paths.

My first attempt at taking an unfamiliar path was joining the Bangladesh Military Academy after high



school. Two days into training, buzz cut and all, I knew it was not my path. Again, it is a highly pursued profession for many in Bangladesh, just like it was for my father. But it was not a fit for me.

When I left, my platoon commander told me, "You are disgracing yourself." Those words haunted me for years. But I eventually learned this: choosing the wrong path does not mean you must stay on it. Growth often begins with the courage to walk away, reflect, and rewrite your story.

That moment also taught me something essential about leadership and learning. Real growth requires both learning and unlearning; questioning expectations and assumptions handed down by family, society, or fear, and making space for new ideas and perspectives.

In many ways, this is what schools like Harvard look for — not flawless trajectories, but evidence of curiosity, self-awareness, and a leadership philosophy shaped through reflection. Your self-awareness and the rationale behind your career and life choices are the core of what Harvard tests during the MBA interview.

It also helps to become genuinely good at what you do.

Excellence, when sustained, speaks. Institutions like Harvard value depth, whether that shows up as promotions at work, leadership in your entrepreneurial venture, or becoming a subject matter expert who creates meaningful impact in a unique industry or role.

Passion matters too, especially the kind that keeps returning no matter how busy or tired you are. The things you pursue outside your job, such as leadership roles, community work, social or creative initiatives, are not "extras." They are expressions of conviction. These experiences in your resume will make you stand out as a candidate when you apply for business schools.

Academic credibility plays its role as well. You do not need to be a lifelong top student in class; I certainly was not. But rigorous programs such as IVY League MBAs demand discipline.

Standardised tests such as GRE, GMAT — flawed as they may be, reflect consistency and commitment. Preparing for them alongside a full-time job is, in itself, proof of discipline and focus, which are needed to survive in competitive schools such as Harvard.

More than anything, global-mindedness matters. Harvard Business School curates their class every year, so it consists of leaders representing over 60 countries. Being open to difference and learning from people who think and live differently are crucial values that you must practice in your everyday life to thrive in a global classroom, such as at Harvard.

One of the most humbling lessons I've learned is this: the moment you

believe you are the smartest person in the room is the moment you stop growing.

Finally, I want to speak directly to those of us who grew up in Bangladesh. We are often taught, subtly or explicitly, to see our identity as a limitation. Our passport is weak, we're told. Our systems are flawed. Our odds are stacked. Yet, growing up here also gives us something rare: proximity to reality. We witness inequality, social and generational bottlenecks at home and around us. While others travel across continents seeking "impact experiences," many of us live among opportunities to serve, to lead, and to solve problems every day.

Growing up in Bangladesh gave my character an edge; it helped shape my personality, and I am sure that is true for many of you. Play that to your strength!

Somewhere, someone is reading this while quietly negotiating with their doubts, wondering if they are "enough," if their background is too ordinary, their passport too weak, their dreams too ambitious. If that's you, let me say this: don't reject yourself on behalf of the world. Prepare earnestly. Stay curious. And when the moment comes, take the leap.

Before I end, I want to return to a line I once read: "Dreams are not what you see in your sleep; dreams are what keep you awake." I understand this now more than ever. Even after moving to Canada, earning a master's degree from a top university (University of Toronto), building a career, navigating immigration, and finding stability, I still found myself awake at night, thinking about an unfinished dream. I wanted to sit in a Harvard classroom, to learn from the best, to be shaped into a leader who could create lasting impact.

That restlessness was my answer. It told me it was time.

So, I will leave you with this question: What is the dream that keeps you awake at night?

By Tasneem Omar Ava
Photo: Collected



Clothes, cash, or gold? How to pick the perfect wedding gift

It's that time of the year again. The time of chilly breeze, pithas, a stolen holiday and of course, weddings!

Weddings are a merry time, but for those who have been invited, this special occasion may bring a happy case of confusion: what to gift the new couple?

Fret not, for we have done our homework for you and found the answer. We have asked couples from all across the country about their best and worst wedding gifts, and the answer just might help you make your decision.

a new abode, and they will need to buy those anyway. This way, they get a little help in the form of a gift," said Shahed Hasan, an engineer who has recently welcomed a baby girl.

On the other hand, while the frequent choice of crockery as gifts can cause a conundrum, they are very useful. "After my marriage, I realised that I owned very few crockery and utensils apart from my melamine plate. So, the dinner set was a lifesaver. We can laugh at it all we want, but crockery is super useful for



Clothes? Really?

Don't get me wrong. Clothes are a good gift and very useful, but the issue with clothes is that they're a hit or miss. Meaning it will either be the perfect gift or the most annoying one. There are too many variables to count when it comes to clothes. From colour, size, design and style and of course, personal choice. All these variables make sartorial gifts a risky choice.

Take Sumaiya Pervin, for example. She got married four years ago, and still she remembers the one gift that she has not touched ever since. "It's a saree. It's not that it was a bad gift, it's just that this type and style of saree is not my cup of tea. I just don't want to wear it, you know?" she said.

Appliances or décor?

Home appliances and decorating instruments are usually a good gift according to newlyweds. "The best gift I received at my wedding was a cabinet. And personally, I think furniture is a fantastic gift for new couples. They are trying to build

new couples," observed Mohim Zobayer.

Decorating pieces, however, is another story. They are rarely considered a useful gift and often left to gather dust. More than half of the couples we interviewed said that decorating items were the least useful gift.

Shanjida Rimi was sharing a similar experience. "I got a wind chime, and I still have not figured out where to put it because it just does not go with our decorations".

Kashfia Kaba, a student who lives abroad, said, "There were a lot of decorating items in my wedding gifts, like plastic plants and wall decor made of clay. I could not use any of them."

Gold is forever but can't go wrong with cash

The one gift that everyone agrees is the most useful is either gold or cash. And for good reasons. Iftakher Mahmud Ziad, a private university teacher, explained from his personal experience. "Whatever gift you are giving, there is a chance that it may not



be as much appreciated as you hope. But if you give them cash, they can buy exactly what they want and need. Besides, starting a new family is quite expensive. The cash becomes very handy at such times".

Sumaiya shared the same view. "The gold earrings I received have become my go-to jewellery," she elaborated.

Besides, with cash and gold, there is no risk of there being more than one can use. These are valuable assets that can really help the newlywed venture into their new journey. Similarly, aside from cash, a trip as a gift is usually well received.

"My elder brother paid for my honeymoon. It was very much appreciated", recalled one Masudur Rahman.

remembered with reverence.

"We said no gifts, but of course, many people brought gifts. Someone gifted me five books. I still have not figured out who it was. But it was a very special gift, unique from all the others," said Nashrat Ahmed Anchal.

Masudur Rahman recalls a personal gift with fondness. "It was a Polaroid camera. A colleague sent it to me with a small handwritten note. It was a symbol of her affection for me, and it meant a lot".

Our intention was not to belittle any gifts. Gifts are noble gestures, and it is the gesture that counts, not the material itself. That being said, we really hope our exploration in search of the perfect gift



Make it personal

Keeping their usefulness and values aside, the only thing that can truly elevate a gift above all others is that personal touch that only comes from bonding. And gifts with personal touches are not just appreciated, they are

has been useful for you in deciding what to gift at the next wedding you are invited to. The greatest gift will always be love and blessings.

By Ashif Ahmed Rudro
Photo: Collected

#TRAVEL

Love winter weather? Visit these Bangladesh destinations

It is often said the cold felt across our country is no match for the snowy winters in other parts of the world, but if anyone here wishes to truly taste winter, they should travel to the northern parts of Bangladesh during this time.

Every winter, the northern districts of Bangladesh face the lowest temperatures and are the epicentres of attraction for winter loving tourists. For the brave group of people drawn to the allure of the foggy and mystical weather of northern Bangladesh, below is a list of the three best possible locations to explore.

Bogura and the historic sites frozen in time

Bogura, the city often described as the gateway to northern Bengal, offers some of the finest historic wonders to explore, especially during winter. Most of Bogura's historic attractions are located in the open air.

During summer, the average temperature in Bogura ranges from 30 to 34 degrees Celsius and higher during heatwaves, making it an unsuitable time for many tourists, especially people prone to migraines and heat strokes. This complication is eliminated in winter, when the cool season offers the perfect weather for visiting these locations.

Visiting many of Bogura's heritage sites is like travelling back in time; a trip to this city of history and culture demands a visit to two of its most popular archaeological sites, Mahastangarh and Paharpur. A walk through the remains of Mahastangarh, the capital of the ancient city of Pundranagara, offers a glimpse of the architectural style of the Mauryan



Paharpur.

PHOTO: SHAHREAR KABIR HEEMEL

Empire. It is located in the Shibganj Upazila on the western bank of the Karatoya river.

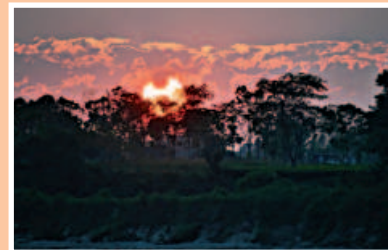
Near Mahastangarh is a massive landmark called "Behular Bashor Ghor" which is associated with legendary ancient folklore and the Bhasu Vihara, a notable Buddhist monastery from seventh century in the Shibganj Upazila, which are also among key archaeological attractions in the city.

As one among the three UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Bangladesh, remains of the Somapura Mahavira in Paharpur is one of the most well maintained and key tourist attractions found very close to Bogura, in the Naogaon district. Exploring the Buddhist establishment once frequented by the 8th century Palas, insinuates sheer chills as well as gratitude in anyone who's visited, that such history has been preserved to this day for us to witness.

Tetulia Upazila, Panchagarh

Panchagarh is the northernmost district of Bangladesh located within the Rangpur Division and at the border with India. Within Panchagarh is the wondrous Upazila of Tetulia, one of the dreamiest places to visit during winter.

Tetulia and its tea gardens are famous for their beauty, but in winter they transform into a more mystical version of themselves. In the early mornings, the tea gardens located in small valleys are covered in a blanket of fog while in the higher mountainous regions, clouds regularly pass by. Even without staying at specific higher range hotels, it is possible to catch glimpses of distant peaks and mountain ranges in the backdrop of the serene tea gardens



Sunset from the bank of Mohananda River, Panchagarh.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

of Tetulia during winter.

The world's third highest mountain, Kangchenjunga, located at the foothills of Himalayan Ranges has the clearest viewing point from Bangladesh in Tetulia. The dry season in winter is considered a good time of visit. For lucky tourists, if the weather permits, it can offer a beautiful view on sunny winter mornings, often accompanied by hovering clouds of mist above the distant mountain ranges.

While many newly built guesthouses in Tetulia offer spectacular views of Kangchenjunga, the Tetulia Dak Bungalow has always been voted as the best location for this view. Built by the King of Bihar, the bungalow is located on the banks of the Mahananda river,

15 to 20 kilometres above ground level, offering clear views of the mountain, especially during sunrise and sunset, when the peaks appear golden due to the sunlight.

Dinajpur's artificial waterfall: The Mohonpur Rubber Dam

Built on the Atrai and Kakrai rivers of Dinajpur, the Mohonpur Rubber Dam is not only an irrigation project to provide agricultural support to farmers of Dinajpur but it has also become a widespread tourist attraction, mainly due to its aesthetic backdrop for photographs.

In monsoon, the water levels in the dam are high with the two rivers gushing through, making it risky to get anywhere near the dam. People only take pictures from a distance. During winter however, there is reduced water flow through the dam and visitors are often seen getting a closer glimpse of it to take pictures at this beautiful location and observe the dam itself, which imitates the view of a breathtaking artificial waterfall.

Covering a large area of land and reserved water, the Mohonpur Dam is a stunning view under the uninterrupted blue sky above and rivers flowing below. The clouds hovering above it in winter, especially in the early mornings and right before sunset in the evening, turn the place into a magical site.

Whether you are a traveller out on your own across the country or with a group of friends and family, the above-mentioned locations offer equally enjoyable experiences for all, as long as you are passionate about exploring the true beauty of winter and are willing to accept some adventures along the way.

By Raidah Hasan



A view of Kanchenjunga from Panchagarh.
Photo: Mostafa Shabuj

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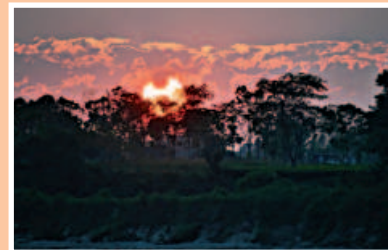
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