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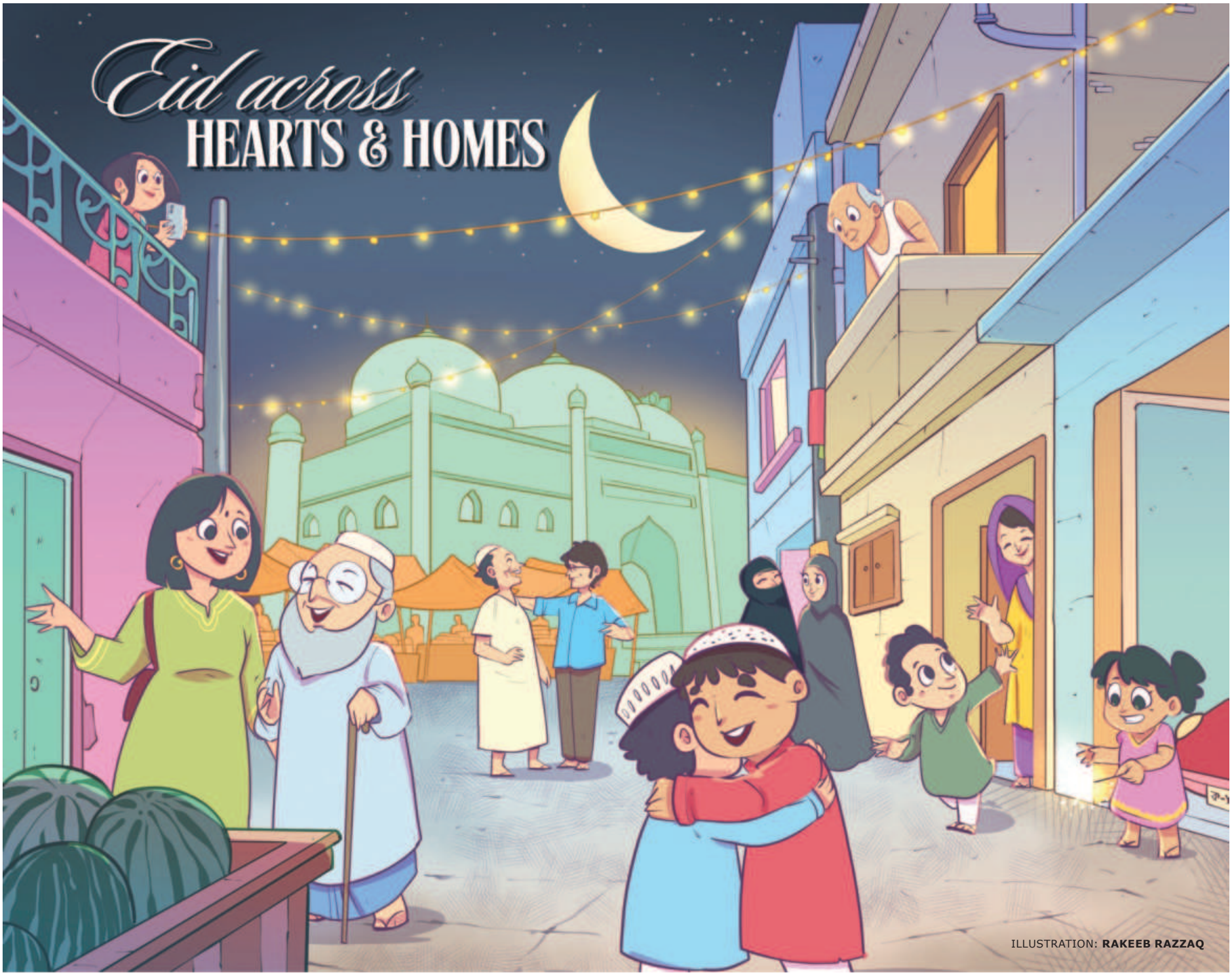

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When Eid holiday evenings belonged to TV programmes

FARHEEN RAHMAN

"Ajke keu channel paltale kintu khub kharap hobe, keu remote e haat dibi naa," boomed the voice of my grandfather on the evening of Eid. Soon, the kids, teenagers, and a few reluctantly dragged young adults would be gathered in the living room while the TV volume rose slightly higher than necessary. The real celebration, however, arrived during the advertisement breaks, when bowls of *bhaja muri* and *chanachur* appeared along with cups of *cha*. And somehow, between the dramatic acting, sarcastic commentary, and *dadu's* living room dictatorship, everyone ended up watching the whole programme anyway, which goes to show, the fun of Eid also included these shows and the chaos around them.

The excitement of Eid television was never limited to a single day; it spanned the entire holiday. Channels would prepare special line-ups of dramas, telefilms, musical shows, comedy segments, dance performances, and magazine programmes designed specifically for the festive season. Families would schedule their evenings around these broadcasts, and the living room would transform into a shared theatre of laughter and debate.

Today, however, the rhythm of those evenings has changed. The television is no longer the undisputed centre of attention. Smartphones outshine the TV screen, and global streaming platforms vie with national channels for viewers' time. Many young people now spend their Eid vacations scrolling through short videos or watching international series. For some, traditional Eid programmes feel predictable or old-fashioned, while others simply prefer the convenience of watching content individually rather than gathering around a scheduled broadcast. In a festival that celebrates togetherness, entertainment has become more solitary.

Yet the Bangladeshi entertainment industry continues to prepare for Eid with the same enthusiasm as ever. This Eid season is bringing a wave of new film releases, such as *Prince: Once Upon a Time in Dhaka*, *Bonolota Express*, *Malik*, and *Durbar,* among many others. Television channels are also keeping the Eid tradition alive with carefully curated schedules throughout the holiday week. The beloved magazine programme, *Ityadi,* is returning with its traditional Eid special.

Perhaps the real challenge today is not the lack of Eid programmes, but the shrinking habit of watching them together. The programmes still exist, the artists still perform, and the channels still invest in creating festive experiences. What may be missing is the collective moment, the shared laughter, the spontaneous commentary, and the friendly arguments about which show was better.

Maybe this Eid vacation can offer an opportunity to rediscover that tradition. Watching a drama, a musical show, or even a classic episode of *Ityadi* with family might feel slightly old-fashioned at first. But then again, many things that feel old-fashioned often turn into the most cherished memories.

The programmes themselves may change with time, but the spirit behind them still remains. Maybe all that is needed for today's generation is to pause their scrolling for a while and give these Eid programmes another fair shot. Who knows? The next memorable Eid debate in the living room might just be waiting to happen.

And if the hero overacts, the choreography looks slightly dramatic, or someone in the room insists that Eid programmes were better in 2005, that only makes the experience more authentic. After all, half the fun of Eid television was not just the programmes themselves but also the laughter, teasing, and running commentary that surrounded it.

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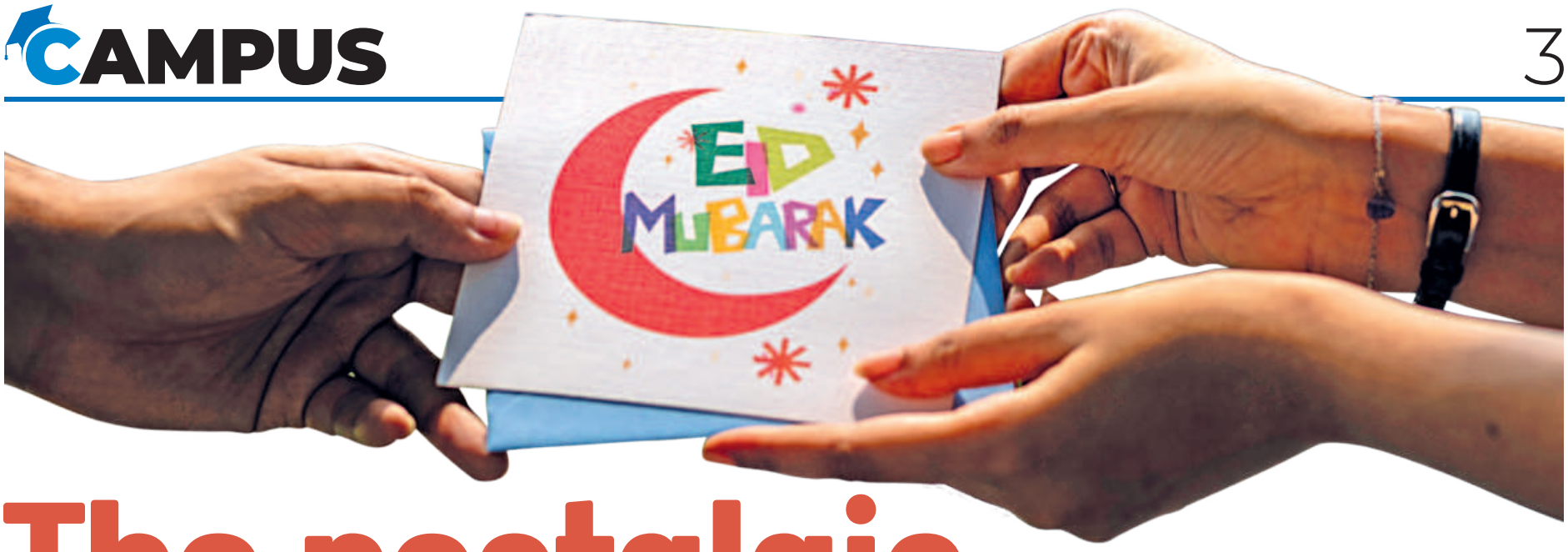

The nostalgic allure of Eid cards

PHOTOS: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

AFRA ANIKA NAWAR KHAN

Growing up, the colourful paper cards adorned with handwritten wishes, prayers, and heartfelt messages were part of some of the fondest memories I had. Today, these simple, tangible forms of greeting have become a nostalgic reminder of a time that felt more personal and slow-paced.

A few days before Eid, my father would take us with him to purchase these Eid cards. Often, they would come in the shapes of the crescent moon and stars, as well as mosques and lanterns. But my favourite ones were rectangular shaped and included Tom and Jerry illustrations of the two titular characters wearing *tupis*.

Long before digital messages on WhatsApp became the norm, Eid cards were a cherished part of the celebration. There was a time when Eid card stalls were propped up in alleyways across the country. My sister and I would sift through these stacks of cards in search of the perfect one.

The experience of putting together the perfect Eid card wasn't limited to just buying it. The next step also mattered: writing a message inside that felt personal. We would sit down with a pen, time on our hands, and put in the thought. At times, we would copy short poems and scribble inside the cards, or simply wish our loved ones happiness and prosperity.

Eid also meant a long holiday. So, on the last day of school, my friends and I would exchange Eid cards until we met again. During art class, my classmates and I used to sit with our art supplies and draw each other with moons, stars, and shimmering smiley stickers pasted on top.

"Eid Mubarak", we would write in bold, filling them with vibrant colours. Each card used to be unique, received by a friend that we held close to our hearts. To this day, I have safely tucked away the many Eid cards my best friend has given me since the age of nine.

Over time, like many things, this tradition began to fade. With the rise of smartphones and social media, our communication methods have transformed. Eid greetings now reach our friends and family through a few taps on our phone screens, and rarely carry the same personal touch as a handwritten card.

Despite the shift, this year I observed people attempting to revive the lost tradition of Eid cards. Most notably, I came across a post on Instagram where the photos displayed a stall of Eid cards on the streets of Mirpur. I immediately zoomed in on the cards, hoping they would resemble the ones my sister and I bought as kids. While the stalls don't display the ones that belonged to my childhood, they are a sign of the nostalgia of what once was, sharing the same purpose of spreading the joy of Eid with others.

For many of us, the Eid cards continue to carry a special warmth, serving as a reminder of the crowded markets, the colourful stalls, and the quiet moments we spent writing the messages at night. The nostalgia lingers of the times we spent writing the perfect wishes, evoking memories of days when joy emanated from the fold of a paper card.

We would like to extend our gratitude to Anico by Anica Hossain (@anicatastrophe on Instagram) for lending us their products for this photoshoot.

How academic obligations affect EID CELEBRATIONS

TASFIAH LIAKAT

Eid is meant to be a day of celebration with family and friends after a month of fasting. It's supposed to mean new clothes in shopping bags, kitchens filled with the smell of food, late-night laughter with *mehedi*-stained hands, waking up early to visit relatives, crowded dining tables, and long afternoons with cousins.

But for many students, the joy of Eid is diminished by academic pressure. As upcoming exams, assignments, lab reports, and other submission deadlines loom at the edge of the festivities, it is quite difficult to switch off during the holidays.

Fatema Tuz Zohra, a class seven student at Rajuk Uttara Model College, thought that the long Ramadan break would be the perfect lead-up to Eid, but instead, she's busy with homework. "My parents remind me to study every day, and my tutors keep giving me more and more work," Fatema comments. "I spend most of my time studying now, so the excitement for Eid isn't there anymore."

Some feel an internal urge to study even when their parents encourage them to take a break. Sadman Tasin, a ninth-grader at Glenrich International School, shares, "My parents think vacations are meant to free your mind from the year-long stress. They believe it's extremely important to take a break instead of piling on more work."

Still, stepping away from his studies is not easy for him. "Exam anxiety and stress randomly kick in, even when I'm trying to enjoy the holidays," Sadman admits. To manage his anxiety, he tries to finish as much of his studies as he can before Eid to be able to spend more time with his family.

Eid briefly becomes peaceful only after a major academic phase ends. For Ruhama Radia Mahbub, who will begin classes at the University of Asia Pacific this July, this year's Eid carries a special meaning. She sees it as her first and last carefree Eid before university life begins.

In previous years, when exams were near, she barely cared about buying Eid dresses, meeting friends, or visiting relatives. "This year I want to do all the things I couldn't do before and focus on having fun without worrying about anything," Ruhama notes. "I plan to meet my friends, as all of us are finally free now."

The shift becomes clearer when students enter university. With midterms and semester finals scheduled immediately after Eid, celebration takes a backseat to exam preparation. Mayesha Hasin, a third-year Industrial and Production Engineering (IPE) student at Islamic University of Technology (IUT), expects to spend all of the holiday studying. She also plans to use the break to prepare for future internships.

"I'm not at all excited about Eid this time," Mayesha states. "I'm very worried about how much I still need to study. With exams so close after, I don't have the luxury to slack off or relax."

Nafisa Anjum, a third-year student of the Department of Leather Engineering at Dhaka University (DU), feels that since her first year, Eid holidays have been turned into preparatory leave, which completely ruins the festive spirit. "I don't take books home during Eid anymore," Nafisa states. "Instead, I try to return to the hall early so I can at least spend a couple of days of Eid properly."

Social expectations add another layer of tension. Even when students want to stay home and work, relatives expect them to visit during Eid. Declining an invitation leads to repeated calls and questions until the student feels compelled to give in.

"Saying that I won't go doesn't really help because they keep requesting again and again," expresses Farha Fauzia, a computer science and engineering (CSE) student at BRAC University. "Parents are supposed to be happy when their children want to stay home and study, but my parents always insist on taking me along to relatives' houses, no matter how much I say I don't want to go."

Sometimes the stress is also psychological. Jarine Tasnim Ava, a third-year Mechanical Engineering (ME) student at IUT, describes the feeling as a constant ticking clock. While trying to enjoy Eid, she says it feels like a countdown ticking away in the background. It also depends on who is around her. "If my cousins come over, I can forget about deadlines and exams for a while," Jarine shares. "But with almost anyone else, it doesn't feel the same, and the stress stays with me."

Appreciating Eid is even more difficult for students studying abroad. University schedules usually don't pause for religious holidays, and missing classes or labs has a severe impact on grades. As a result, celebrating Eid with family is not really an option.

"We still have classes during Eid week. We only get a holiday if Eid falls on Saturday," explains Nusrat Jahan Alve, a CSE student at Sejong University, Seoul. "If Eid falls on a class day, the most I might manage is a quick phone call back home in between lectures."

The meaning of Eid shifts once more as student life begins to end. For Nusaiba Binte Asad, a final-year student at the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) at Jahangirnagar University (JU), this Eid will be her last one as a student. With her finals and thesis behind her, she finds herself mourning the long vacations she once took for granted.

"As students, we get at least around twenty-five days of vacation and, in some years, even forty to fifty days. I can't even imagine getting that much time off once I start working," Nusaiba reflects.

Even though exams are no longer weighing on her mind this time around, she's worried about the next step in her life. "There was always an exam waiting for me after Eid," Nusaiba remarks. "This Eid feels a bit lighter because there are no more semesters. But at the same time, there's a new tension about what job I'll get and what my life will look like next once I start working."

In spite of the heavy workload, students still find ways to try to hold on to the spirit of Eid in various ways. Jarine, known among her friends and family as the "*mehedi* expert", spends *chaand raat* drawing henna patterns on the hands of her younger sister, cousins, and even friends who come over. For Farha, the *chaand raat* usually ends with her cousins convincing her to step outside for a while. "My cousins drag me out every year," she says. "We just roam around the city in a rickshaw for hours. There are lights, people everywhere, and for that small period, I forget about everything else." The late-night rides through the busy streets remind her that Eid celebrations still exist beyond deadlines and assignments.

Whether it's finishing coursework early to spend a few more hours with their family, or making plans with friends after months of studying, or putting their books aside for the day, students find their own way of celebrating the holiday amidst academic obligations. Deadlines, obligations, and expectations may dull the excitement, but the joy can still be found in small moments.

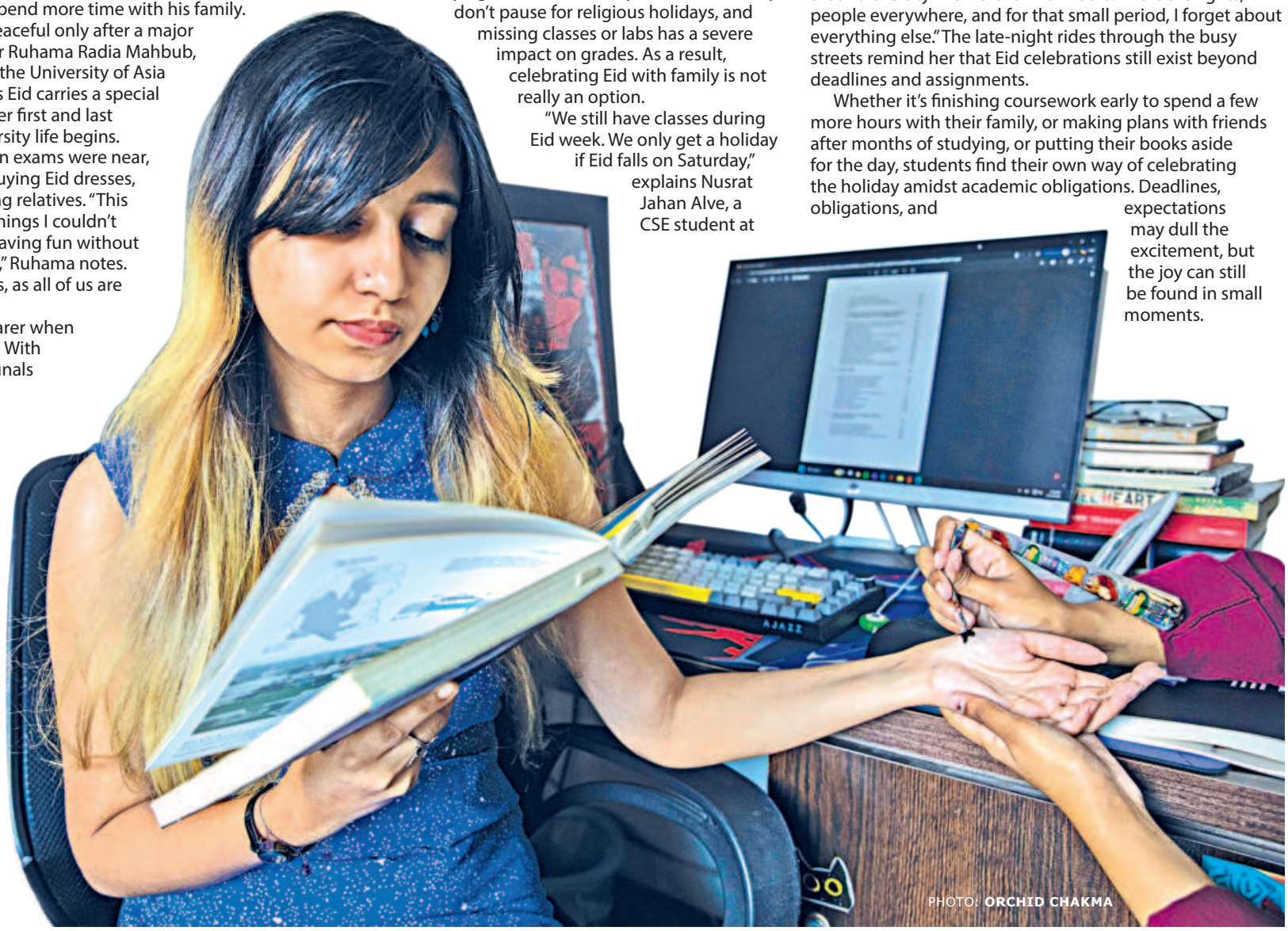

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

The weight of emotional complexities during Eid

As young people reckon with the tumult of many aspects of their lives – financial responsibilities, familial expectations, and loneliness – they are still expected to carve out space for Eid celebrations.

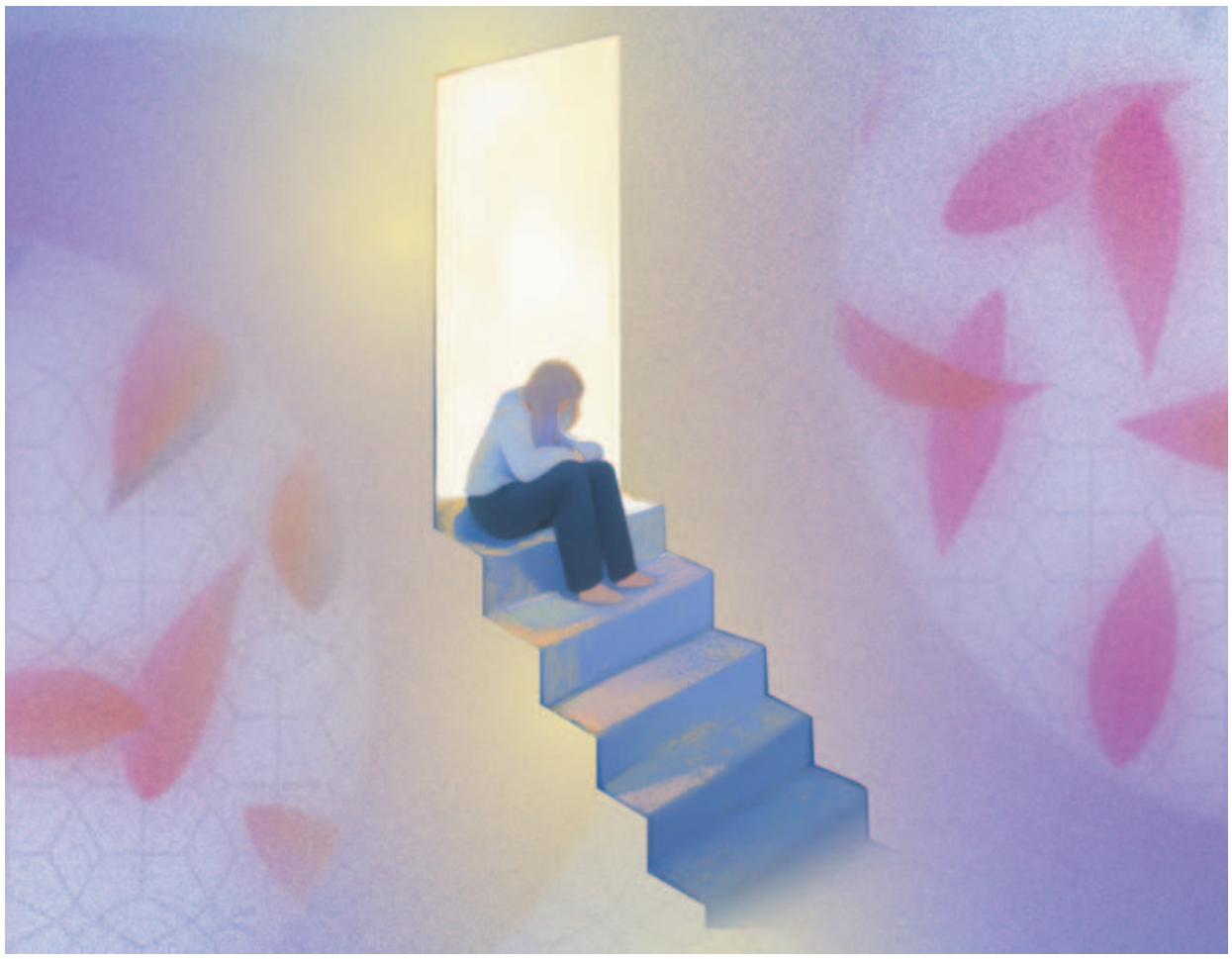

ILLUSTRATION: **ABIR HOSSAIN**

NUZHAT TAHIYA

The alarm goes off at 5 AM. Outside, the adhan for Fajr pierces the early morning silence of the city, and somewhere in the building, a mother is already frying vermicelli for *shemai*. The air is thick with anticipation. It is Eid-ul-Fitr. And yet, for a growing number of young Bangladeshis, the day arrives carrying weight alongside the joy.

Nobody really tells you about this part of Eid. The Instagram feed is full of coordinated outfits and plates heaped with *polao* and beef *rezala*. The TikToks are all hugs and laughter. But in the margins of all that celebration lives something more complicated – something that many young people feel but rarely say out loud, because how do you admit that Eid is hard when everyone insists that it is only beautiful?

The pressure of togetherness

For BRAC University student Tahmid*, the week before Eid is defined less by excitement than by dread. His parents separated three years ago, and every Eid since has meant the same impossible arithmetic: whose house first, whose feelings get hurt, which parent spends the morning alone.

"People ask where you're spending Eid, and you just smile and say 'at home', because explaining the truth – that there are now two homes and you're already grieving whichever one you're not at – feels too heavy for a holiday conversation," he says.

Family conflict around Eid isn't limited to divorce. There are old wounds reopened at reunion tables – sibling rivalries, inheritance disputes, the cousin who everyone knows has done something but nobody names, and so on. There are the comparisons that sting. For young people still figuring out who they are, Eid gatherings can sometimes feel less like a celebration and more like being cross-examined.

"My extended family only really comes together at Eid," says Riya*, a garments quality officer from Narayanganj. "And every time, there's some argument. Last year, it was about my grandfather's land. The adults fought the whole day. By the Asr prayer time, I just went and sat on the roof by myself. I love my family, but Eid also reminds me of every unresolved thing between us."

When the budget doesn't match the occasion

Eid in Bangladesh is also, undeniably, an economic event. New clothes are not optional. Eid *salami* must be given to children and younger relatives. For families with comfortable means, this is simply tradition. For young people scrambling through entry-level salaries, freelance gigs, or part-time work while studying, the financial pressure of Eid can be genuinely crushing.

Meghna* works as a junior software developer in Chittagong and sends money home to her parents in Sylhet each month. Come Eid, the expectations multiply. "I calculated it once," she says. "Between new clothes for my parents and two younger sisters, *salami* for the kids in the family, contributions to the Eid feast, and my own train ticket home, I was spending nearly two months' salary. I smiled through all of it. But inside I felt like I was drowning."

There is cultural silence around this. To say you cannot afford to celebrate Eid with fanfare is, for many families, a form of failure: a confession that you have not done well enough. Young people, particularly those who are the financial hopes of their families, carry this burden in silence. The result is a kind of collective financial performance: everyone pretending abundance, yet some quietly buckling under the weight of spectacle.

The loneliness nobody names

Then there is loneliness – perhaps the most quietly widespread Eid experience for young Bangladeshis today, and the least spoken about.

Bangladesh has one of the largest diaspora populations in the world. Hundreds of thousands of young Bangladeshis are building lives in Malaysia, the Gulf states, the United Kingdom, Canada, and beyond. For some of them, Eid is observed in a country that does not celebrate it: workplaces stay open, streets don't fill with prayer, and the joyous roar of a Bangladeshi Eid morning is replaced by a video call that keeps freezing.

But you don't have to live abroad to feel alone on Eid. Millions of young people have migrated internally – from village to city, from district towns to Dhaka – for education or work. Not everyone can afford to go home. Not everyone has a home to return to.

Farhan* grew up in Barishal but has been living in a hostel in Dhaka for three years. This Eid, a last-minute work commitment means he cannot make the journey home.

"Dhaka is completely silent on Eid. Everyone goes home except people like me. I'll probably walk to the mosque alone for Eid prayer, eat a meal I cooked myself, and watch my family's photos on WhatsApp. I keep telling myself to be grateful. I am not sure it's working."

This kind of loneliness intersects with something particular about young adulthood – the untethering. You are no longer entirely the child sheltered by your parents' celebration, and you are not yet the parent creating the celebration for others. You are in between, and Eid, which is built entirely on the foundation of togetherness and tradition, can expose that liminality sharply.

In a similar vein, some must also grapple with the loneliness of celebrating after loss. Eid is profoundly anchored in memory. When someone central to those memories is gone, Eid becomes an annual reminder of their absence: a day shaped around an empty space that no one can fill.

Nafisa*, an O level student, lost her mother to illness 18 months ago. This will be her second Eid without her. "Last Eid, I was still numb, so I don't really remember it," she says. "This year, I will feel it properly. Everyone will be putting on new clothes and taking photos, and I'll be doing those things too. But there will be this part of me that's somewhere else entirely – at her grave in Cumilla, just missing her."

Rewriting the story

None of this is a reason to give up on Eid. That's not the point. The point, if anything, is the opposite: that Eid is important enough, beloved enough, for its complications to look at and address honestly.

Young Bangladeshis are increasingly finding ways to reframe what the day can look like. Some are establishing new micro-traditions with close friends: intimate iftar groups that evolve into Eid morning gatherings for people who are also far from family. Some are quietly setting financial boundaries, choosing one meaningful gift over five performative ones. Some are making the solo Eid a kind of ritual of its own — a morning prayer, a good meal, or a long phone call with someone who matters.

Tahmid, who began this story split between two homes, says he has started texting both parents on Eid morning before he visits either – just to say he loves them. It doesn't solve anything. But it is, he says, his way of holding the whole truth at once: the family he has, the family he wished he had, and the love that runs through both.

"I still cry a little on Eid morning," he admits. "But I also still feel joy. I think that's just what it means to grow up."

**Names have been changed upon request.*

Nuzhat is a compulsive doodler and connoisseur of bad early aughts television. Send her recommendations at nuzhat.tahiya@gmail.com

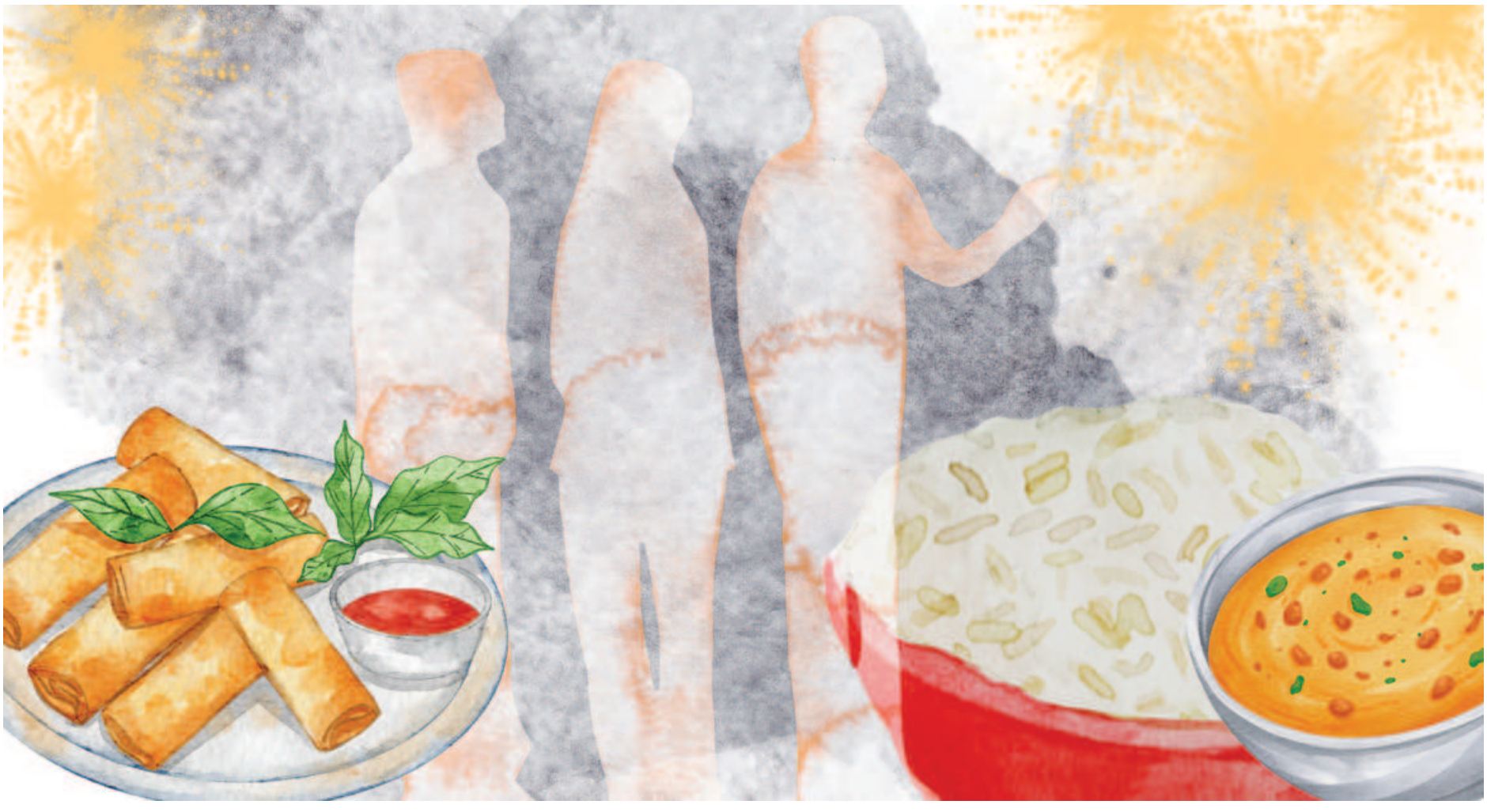

ILLUSTRATION: **ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA**

Love, remembrance, and Eid

Keeping the memories of loved ones alive through Eid rituals

ALEENA YUSRA

Through the waves of grief, many appeals of life tend to dim and lose their radiance. This phenomenon finds its way during celebrations like Eid, especially since much of its brightness comes from the simple fact of spending it with loved ones. The scintillation of every familiar Eid tradition slightly wanes, as the void left by a missing presence overshadows any light around it.

The emptiness never truly fills itself, but slowly, nearly imperceptibly, we learn to live beside this vacancy. Through a slightly strange, yet sentimental Eid ritual, I found a way to ground the hollow ache of grief after losing my grandmother. As I grew up, most of my memories of her slipped through the gaps between my fingers, leaving me grieving in a borderless void with the pain of forgetting who once filled that space. The only tether to the woman who cradled my childhood was a simple Eid breakfast: *daal bhuna* and *shada bhaat*. It was nearly a sacred delicacy, given how much she loved it and how lovingly she upheld the tradition of starting every Eid day with a warm plate of it. It was also the only thing that kept me connected to her.

And just like that, Eid became a way of grief and celebration coexisting to produce something much more beautiful yet melancholic: a fragile harmony of remembrance amid the festivity. Across different homes and relationships, this bittersweet harmony takes on deeply personal forms, revealing itself through traditions just as intimate.

One such story comes from Shyan Chowdhury, a first-year university student for whom Eid became a journey of loss and restoring sparks. After his father passed away during the Covid-19 pandemic, the house felt emptier, and the celebratory joy of Eid became hard to embrace for both him and his mother.

"In the past, we used to watch fireworks from home, but never light them ourselves," Shyan explains. "After he passed, most holidays became empty and something we neglected. Two years ago, during Eid, we finally lit our own fireworks. I think it was the first time my mother and I truly smiled in a long while; for a moment, it felt like he was there with us, smiling at the sparkles just like he used to when it was the three of us gazing at the sky from his balcony."

Sometimes Eid mornings are inseparable from the scent and warmth of a grandmother's kitchen. Nameera Alisha, currently an O level student, finds herself resonating with this. Every year, she and her siblings would wake up early to help her grandmother make a special *shemai* that had been passed down for generations. Even after her passing, the ritual continued, becoming a way to connect with her once again.

"There was something magical about the way she made the *shemai*," Nameera recalls. "She's no longer with us, but we still make it every Eid. It will never taste exactly like hers, but as we cook together, she's there with us in every knead and every pinch of sweetness. I wait for this every year because in these imperfect, warm moments I feel her love again."

Dayanandan, a class nine student, shares that Eid carries memories of more than one loss. At the age of 13, Dayanandan began learning more about Eid customs from his best friend, who eagerly shared the celebrations with him. After his friend passed away in an accident a year later, Nanda continued visiting his house every Eid, sharing a meal with his parents in quiet remembrance.

"I go to his house every Eid and have food with his parents, using what he taught me to show them that their son isn't gone," he says.

Eid would also make space for someone else after Nanda lost his sister to a terminal illness. Remembering her favourite Eid meal, he began preparing beef rolls every year in her memory. A simple dish became a thread between the past and the present.

"It wasn't extravagant," he recalls, "just a simple beef roll, but after she passed away, I learned to make them myself and cook them every Eid, imagining that maybe if she were here, she'd enjoy my cooking."

For Tasnuva Shyaara, currently in her second year of university, Eid carries the warm presence of relatives who are no longer with her yet are remembered during the quiet moments of family gatherings.

"It's never planned, but every Eid my family reminisces about the days my grandparents were with us," she says. "Whether it's talking about a recipe that was my dadi's or how much nanu loved spending Eid with us, somehow it always finds us and settles yearningly over our hearts. Eid reminds me that no matter how far they are, through sharing their stories, I can keep them alive and close to me."

Tasnuva explains that through these spontaneous conversations, the absence of her loved one is softened, and their presence is gently woven into the cadence of Eid.

Eid for Sahrish Nazmul, an O level student, is as much about ritual and sensory memory as it is about keeping her late grandmother's Eid spirit alive.

"Although she passed away in 2023, we still visit her house to do the same," Sahrish says. "This time, the laughter doesn't quite reach the corners where she was. Yet we honour her by continuing our *mehedi* nights, cooking her *tehari*, and watching the TV shows she thought were masterpieces. Even in her absence, she feels close to our hearts and present in the warmth we share."

Across homes and generations, a pattern emerges: grief and joy often paradoxically share the same space and shape Eid into something profoundly intimate. The ache of loss is never fully overcome, yet with love and resilience, small deliberate acts transform sorrow into remembrance and connection.

Aleena is a struggling student who loves robots and revolutions. Send her your esoteric online archives at: aleenayusra33@gmail.com.

FIRST SALARY, FIRST EID

The first Ramadan as a working adult is as demanding as it is deeply fulfilling, marked by gruelling commutes and drained energy on one end, and the quiet pride of buying Eid gifts with your own paycheck on the other.

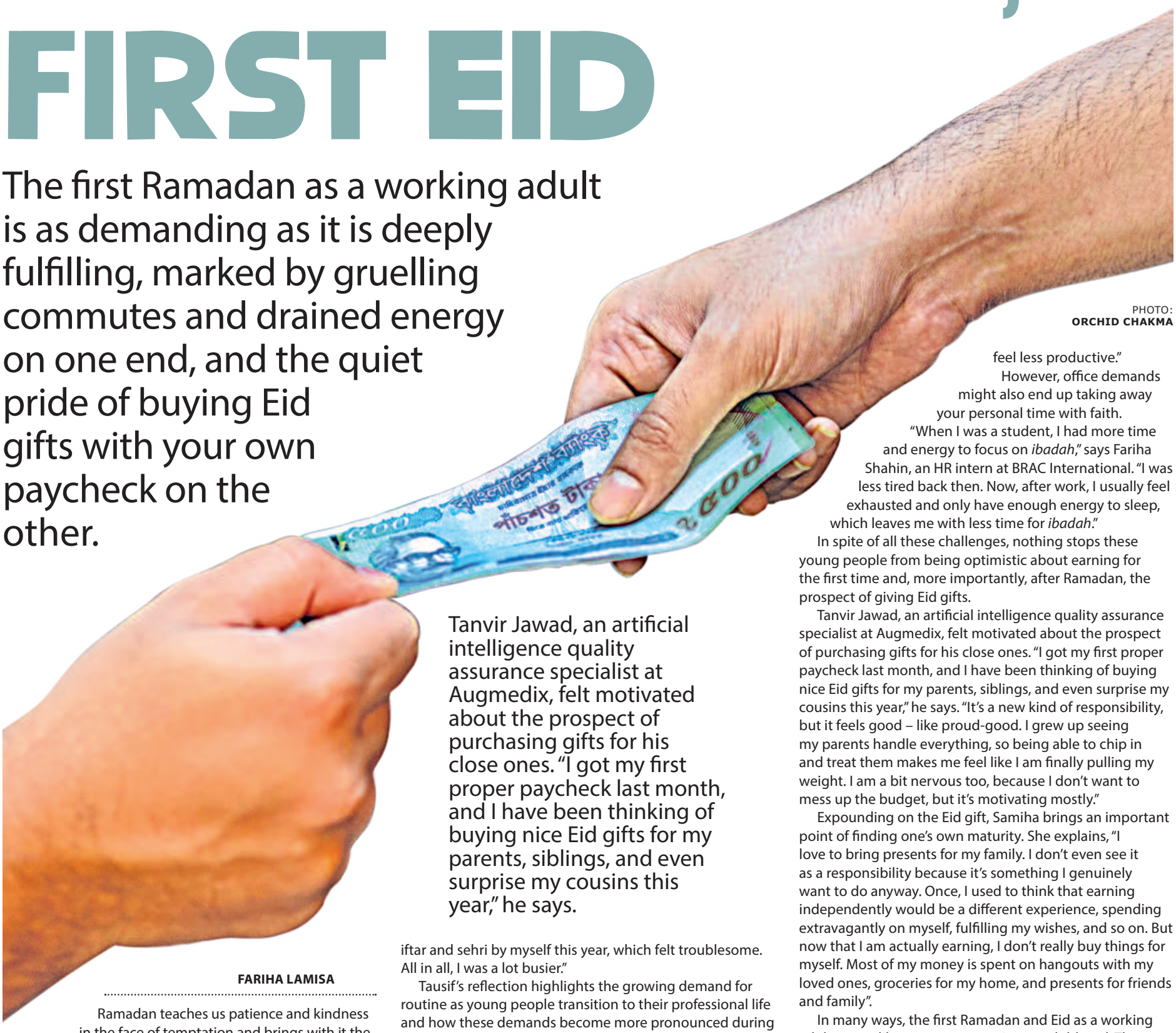

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

FARIHA LAMISA

Ramadan teaches us patience and kindness in the face of temptation and brings with it the joy of Eid-ul-Fitr. For young people stepping into the workforce, however, the holy month, as well as the Eid celebrations that follow, carries a different weight. Gone is the warmth of university friendships and the comfort of a familiar routine. It is instead replaced by an office, a new identity, and the quiet demands of adulthood.

So, how does it feel to experience Ramadan in this unfamiliar skin?

Wajih Tausif, a management trainee at Nestle, points out how this Ramadan came with a lot more responsibilities compared to his carefree university days. "Back in university, I could stay up till sehri and then wake up after 12," says Tausif. "Now, I have to wake up early for work and don't have nearly as much free time. Besides, I am currently living by myself away from my family, so I also had to make iftar and sehri by myself this year, which felt troublesome. All in all, I was a lot busier."

Tanvir Jawad, an artificial intelligence quality assurance specialist at Augmedix, felt motivated about the prospect of purchasing gifts for his close ones. "I got my first proper paycheck last month, and I have been thinking of buying nice Eid gifts for my parents, siblings, and even surprise my cousins this year," he says.

Tausif's reflection highlights the growing demand for routine as young people transition to their professional life and how these demands become more pronounced during Ramadan. Beyond the challenges of adjusting to a stricter routine, young professionals in Dhaka must also contend with the city's relentless traffic during Ramadan. Dhaka is notorious for its traffic. In Ramadan, this problem further intensifies, which was clearly visible this year.

Unlike university classes, where one might have gotten away with being late, but in the workplace, this becomes impossible due to professional expectations. Regarding this, Samiha Binte Kibria, a management trainee at City Bank, says, "It's been quite different as I seldom had classes during Ramadan, but this year, I had to attend the office every day. I cannot skip a day at the office as I used to at university. The Dhaka traffic after office hours feels unbearable. Many even had to break our fasts on the road. Even though the Ramadan office timing is shorter, the days feel more exhausting. The lethargy is also there, and we all feel less productive."

However, office demands might also end up taking away your personal time with faith.

"When I was a student, I had more time and energy to focus on *ibadah*," says Fariha Shahin, an HR intern at BRAC International. "I was less tired back then. Now, after work, I usually feel exhausted and only have enough energy to sleep, which leaves me with less time for *ibadah*."

In spite of all these challenges, nothing stops these young people from being optimistic about earning for the first time and, more importantly, after Ramadan, the prospect of giving Eid gifts.

Tanvir Jawad, an artificial intelligence quality assurance specialist at Augmedix, felt motivated about the prospect of purchasing gifts for his close ones. "I got my first proper paycheck last month, and I have been thinking of buying nice Eid gifts for my parents, siblings, and even surprise my cousins this year," he says. "It's a new kind of responsibility, but it feels good – like proud-good. I grew up seeing my parents handle everything, so being able to chip in and treat them makes me feel like I am finally pulling my weight. I am a bit nervous too, because I don't want to mess up the budget, but it's motivating mostly."

Expounding on the Eid gift, Samiha brings an important point of finding one's own maturity. She explains, "I love to bring presents for my family. I don't even see it as a responsibility because it's something I genuinely want to do anyway. Once, I used to think that earning independently would be a different experience, spending extravagantly on myself, fulfilling my wishes, and so on. But now that I am actually earning, I don't really buy things for myself. Most of my money is spent on hangouts with my loved ones, groceries for my home, and presents for friends and family".

In many ways, the first Ramadan and Eid as a working adult seems like a proper ascension to adulthood. The carefree flexibility of university days starts to fade while we adjust to a more disciplined office schedule, long commutes, and the responsibility of consistently balancing work and personal life. Yet, within these new challenges lies a different kind of fulfilment. The ability to contribute to one's family and buy gifts for loved ones during festivals with one's own earnings brings a kind of fulfilment that cannot be found in any other way.

Ramadan and Eid in adulthood may be more demanding, but the experience is also richer with meaning, maturity, and a growing sense of belonging in the world.

Fariha Lamisa is an immature adult who is barely surviving in an apocalyptic world. Send her your well-meaning consolation via flamisa2020@gmail.com

OVER THE YEARS, ON EID

ELMA TABASSUM

Eid morning would find me mysteriously teleported to my grandmother's living room at 7 AM, groggy and festooned in all my shiny new accessories and clothes. We would be lined up like schoolchildren – with me and, for some reason, my parents and uncle on one side and the adults, including my amenable grandparents, on the other. Thus began our conquest for *salami*; before the *muezzin* could even begin the call to prayer, we would run my darling grandparents dry with mischievous smiles and warm hugs. All the fresh notes were gone before the sun could greet us properly.

Once I had exhausted myself claiming what was rightfully mine, someone would hand me a bowl of *shemai*, sneaking maybe a *kabab* or three along with it, and I dozed off until the menfolk were back from prayer, until the feast and festivities could truly begin.

Most Eid days, the plan was to drive across Dhaka sometime before midday to visit more family and be back in time for a longer, second lunch with my grandparents. Although that may seem ambitious, Dhaka was blissfully traffic-free during those three days, and the roads of the city I call home gave way to a silent, serene metropolis. While Eid is filled with exuberance for us humans, it always seemed to me that the city was resting while we celebrated.

Having come back in record time, I would join a platoon of neighbourhood children in securing victory over grown-ups, hapless in the face of our collective childish charm as we extorted them for *salami*. We floated from room to room, listening to adults catch up with each other, and we would revel in the attention we got. The uncles and aunts who had come to visit would marvel at our embellished clothing and wax poetic about the henna that adorned our hands.

I can still see our silhouettes twisting in front of the mirror, as my friends and I admired the way our skirts flared out and the glitter stitched into our expressions caught the light. In one of my earliest memories, we handed out Eid cards to our guests, saving the prettiest ones for our favourite people. A few days before, we made several visits to the small stalls selling these cards on the kerb of our street, which are an anomaly now.

When the table was set, we would struggle to gather every heavy, old-fashioned chair in the house, and even that would not be enough for everyone. So, the kids would gladly take the opportunity to carry their loaded plates into an adjacent bedroom, where we could gossip and eat with not a care in the world. We took it upon ourselves to shout out praise about the cooking and requests for more throughout the meal, while my aunt or my mother would come rushing in with a bowl of something or other that they served at the big table but forgot to pass over to us. The end of the meal meant corralling everyone into an air-conditioned room, and since we could no longer run amok, we would listen to the adults talk until we nodded off, with our new clothes pressing creases on our cheeks.

Over the years, our lives have gotten more complex and emptier all at once. Grief has sometimes meant that we end up losing an entire family, instead of just one person. Amongst all of us, it was my grandfather who wanted us to be seated at the table together, but now that he is no longer with us, no one can quite seem to muster up that energy anymore. No matter how much we try, as we know he would have liked us to, it is not possible to replicate the magic from before.

Unfortunately, since we moved to a different part of Dhaka, teleportation no longer works, and so we spent the early morning of Eid at home. My mother still nudges me awake to the smell of *polao* and *beresta*, but I stand alone at the door to greet my parents before my father goes off to pray. Even if we were to live closer, it would not make much of a difference, as for the last half-decade of my life, I have worn a guilty conscience along with my new clothes on Eid.

Having given all my O levels, AS, and A levels in the May-June session, I have spent the majority of those Eid holidays bargaining with time. For these exams, one can never feel prepared enough, so I compromised on everything. During *chaand raat*, I wondered if I could spare one or two hours for my henna and argued with myself about whether it should just be on the back of my hand or go up to my wrist.

While it might seem like an exaggeration, when your chemistry exam is literally two days away, the stress can make even sleep feel like an indulgence. So, after the Eid prayer, we hastily got ourselves dressed and made the hour-long drive to my grandmother's house. I often packed a textbook with me, just in case. There, my parents and uncle no longer get to stand in line with me, especially now that I have a young cousin who looks up at me, too, with hope in her eyes. Besides that, it also means that my grandma stands alone on the other side.

Most uncles and aunts have moved away, as have the neighbours – familiar faces are seldom present alongside us when we visit. While most of us are still here in Bangladesh, we no longer resemble the people we used to be and have newer conquests, like my exams, that are high stakes, grave, and solitary.

Recently, Eid has styled itself in different colours that glimmer no less brightly. While I still have exams, they aren't so demanding, and so I have had much to hope for last Eid and this Eid. There is much joy and gratitude to be found in the blessings of Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr, while over the years, the spiritual beauty of this month of celebration has become more and more radiant. Celebration may not look the same, but it sure does feel the same. There is some merit in not trying to replicate the past but rather being grateful for it and enjoying the present.

ILLUSTRATION: **AZRA HUMAYRA**