VOLUME 25, ISSUE 42, TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2026
CHAITRA 17, 1432 BS

Star LIFE Style

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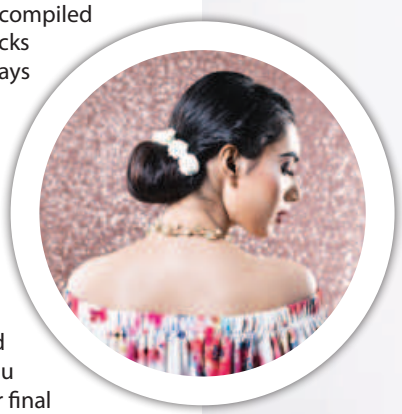
A publication o Daily Star

Yearning *for* roots

#FASHION & BEAUTY

How to Make Your Makeup Last in Humid Weather

Humidity has always been the biggest enemy of long-lasting makeup. Tackling the hot and humid weather while maintaining an untouched makeup look is a big challenge. Luckily, we have compiled some important tips and tricks that ensure your makeup stays on longer during hot days.



Skin prep

First up in the checklist is ensuring your skincare is done well before using any makeup products. Think of it as painting or drawing on a canvas; if you do not have a clean and smooth base to work on, you are already set back on your final artwork.

Skincare should leave your face cleansed and hydrated, but not irritated. Hydration is vital because dry skin can "self-produce" oil later, making it difficult for makeup to set. Massaging some ice cubes or frozen cucumbers on the face is also a great way to soothe the skin before makeup application.

Layering

Avoiding heavy makeup is another deciding factor in a good makeup look on humid days. Layering multiple makeup products on the skin, especially in the T-zone (forehead and nose), contributes to more sweating.

Oil-based formulas and heavyweight products should be switched with lightweight formulas that can blend easily. As sweating naturally increases due to the heat, the goal is to keep things light and simple, yet elegant.

Waterproof

One of the biggest issues with maintaining makeup all day during summer is sweat washing it away. That's where waterproof products come in. Their formula not only prevents makeup removal by water but also prevents makeup from being affected by sweat.

While the range of products available in this category is as large as regular products, there are still plenty of options now, as more makeup brands are exploring this formula.

Finishing touch

A good makeup look always ends with using a setting spray or powder. According to professionals, this step is non-negotiable during hot days. Setting sprays or dusting powders act as an impenetrable barrier, holding the makeup in place, so that it lasts for long hours.

Blotting magic

It is habitual for people to wipe their face with something when sweating, but for anyone with makeup on, that can be a problem. Instead of regular tissue or cloth, using blotting paper is highly recommended. It's made of a material specialised in absorption without rubbing off makeup and is widely available in markets. Other similar alternatives, like kitchen-towel rolls, which are thicker than tissue, are also effective.

Living in a sub-tropical country like ours entails regularly hot days, but on humid days, our skin suffers from more congestion and heat irritation than usual. Some simple beauty tricks and certain changes in makeup methods can go a long way on such days, to help maintain a flawless look.

By Raidah Hasan
Photo: LS Archive/Sazzad Ibne Sayed

Teaching boys to cook can rewrite gender roles at home

PERSPECTIVE

ZAREEN MAHMUD HOSEIN
The writer is Bangladeshi Chartered Accountant and governance professional working on gender and leadership

Illustration: K T Humaira

Across the world, women's equality is still decided not in parliaments or boardrooms, but in kitchens. In 1905, Bengali feminist pioneer Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain imagined Ladyland in Sultana's Dream, a society where women ran science and men were confined to domestic work, cooking with solar stoves behind purdah walls. More than a century later, my thirteen-year-old son has just taught himself to brown a steak. This, I believe, is not a small thing.

Care work and domestic labour remain profoundly unequal worldwide. According to the International Labour Organization, women perform more than three-quarters of unpaid care work globally, and in South Asia, the share exceeds 80 per cent.

Here, where women's labour force participation remains among the lowest in the world, this imbalance inside the home directly shapes inequality outside it. The kitchen is not a private space. It is an economic frontier. Until unpaid care is redistributed, gender equality in wages, leadership, and political power will remain structurally incomplete.

Yet, in my own childhood, that inversion felt almost ordinary.

I grew up in a home where both my parents worked, and where my father experimented with a newly acquired microwave in the early nineties. During Eid ul Adha, my father and the house staff would set up a makeshift charcoal grill. Wearing a chef's apron, he would marinate the cubed meat and slide it onto long iron skewers.

We children, took turns squeezing lime juice over the meat, impatient for the sheekh kebabs to be ready. As soon as they came off the skewer, we were the first to taste. At lunch, those tender charcoal-smoked kebabs sat at the centre of the table surrounded by our joint family.

My father enjoyed the kitchen, and he taught my mother how to navigate it. Married at seventeen, my mother was bookish, with younger sisters far more culinarily inclined.

When she followed my father to the UK, she could not cook. My father was in charge of their kitchen, but when guests arrived, they often assumed the meals were hers. With time she learned. What I absorbed was a quiet disruption of gender roles, one that allowed her to focus on a career.

From those years I remember my mother making her signature cream jamun for special occasions. Its subtle sweetness came from the malai layered onto the fried dough, lightly kissed with cardamom-flavoured sugar syrup.

Then I went abroad to study at Smith College, where I met my best friend.

Chef Julia Child once attended the same institution. She famously said, "No one is born a great cook; one learns by doing." That line mattered to me — not only as culinary wisdom, but as feminist truth.

My best friend and I spent long evenings whipping up meals together, guided by Siddika Kabir's cookbook, Ranna, Khaddo, Pushti. She made cooking accessible to generations of Bangladeshi men and women across the globe.

One evening, we argued while making khichuri. Should we follow Siddika's vegetable khichuri, or my friend's uncle's recipe from his student days in Japan? In the middle of that argument, the oil in the pan overheated and caught fire. The burnt kitchen was sealed off for the rest of the semester. After that I cooked more carefully.

When I lived abroad, I cooked regularly. But after returning home, where domestic help was available, I chose not to spend time in the kitchen. During pregnancy, cravings were frequent, especially for my mother's cream jamun. In a moment of vulnerability, I threw a tantrum. I complained that everyone's mothers made their favourite dishes while mine attended meetings and conferences.

I saw in that moment that even the most liberated woman can internalise society's expectations of care. This is not a personal weakness; it reflects how deeply unpaid labour is embedded in our economies.

As a Chartered Accountant, I am trained to measure value, assets, liabilities, and returns. Yet, I had failed to account for the invisible capital of my mother's time, expecting her to revert to a traditional role for my comfort. Teaching the next generation differently would require a kind of reparative accounting.

Soon my son was born.

Raising him while working was joyful and exhausting. We read books about baking and food together. One day, after a birthday at daycare, he came home with a small apron and chef's hat. We started spending time baking, not to produce meals, but to build belief. The belief that the kitchen belongs to neither women nor men alone. It is a place to share joy and the burden of household chores.

Learning to feed oneself is a life skill. Teaching my son his way around the kitchen was also teaching him to respect unpaid labour—the invisible work that still falls disproportionately on women. This imbalance underpins economic inequality and shapes women's participation in public life.

Redistributing that labour inside homes is one of the quietest and most necessary forms of economic reform.

Then Covid arrived. Our world narrowed. We lived inside shared routines. By the time the school reopened, my son had learned far more than recipes. We watched Junior MasterChef, studied flavours, and tried to recreate dishes at home. His favourite chefs became Jamie Oliver and Gordon Ramsay, whose shows made the kitchen feel creative and disciplined. Yet, his comfort food, like mine, remains rice and chicken curry with potatoes.

And suddenly, he is thirteen.

This afternoon, I came home to the fragrance of onions browning in beef fat. My son was at the stove, without being asked.

For centuries, the kitchen has been framed as women's territory. What I smelled was not simply dinner. It was an inheritance changing hands.

Rokeya imagined liberation inside the walls of Ladyland. Ours may arrive more quietly, across ordinary homes and generations. Reimagining care within the household is a political act everywhere.

Feminism, I have learned, is not only argued. It is practised. The future of women's equality may depend less on speeches than on whether the next generation of boys learns to cook, clean and care.

#FOOD & RECIPES

FAIZA AHMED'S plant-based revival of Bengali food

On a quiet table sits a moulded piece of semolina (suji) halwa. It looks simple enough, almost austere. There is no heavy gloss of ghee, no syrup pooling around the edges, no elaborate garnish. Instead, it carries the faint scent of coconut oil and the subtle green of a tulsi leaf placed carefully on top. For Faiza Ahmed, this modest plate tells a larger story.

"Sujir halwa feels like childhood to me," she says. "The way we usually eat it today – with ghee and milk – is not the only way it existed. I make mine only with coconut oil. I do not add milk because I'm vegan. And I fry the semolina very lightly so it remains soft."

The result is not a reinvention. It is a recovery.

Faiza Ahmed, a fashion designer, visual artist, and culinary thinker, has spent the past decade quietly questioning what Bangladesh chooses to remember and what it chooses to forget. Her plant-based culinary venture, Sanchayita, first launched in 2015, grew out of a simple idea: heritage food should not survive only as nostalgia.

"The idea for Sanchayita was specifically to work on reviving local heritage food," she says.

"Fusion is positive, but entering fusion does not mean sending our heritage food to the departure lounge."

Ahmed often compares this attitude toward food with how people sometimes treat traditional clothing. Just as the saree is dismissed as inconvenient in modern life, simple local foods are often overlooked in favour of new trends.

To her, abandoning these traditions risks weakening cultural identity. "If we discard our own things," she explains, "Then we are living in a borrowed place."

Sanchayita responds to this concern by bringing familiar but often neglected dishes back into contemporary dining spaces.

Many of Ahmed's recipes are rooted in research into older cooking practices.

While exploring heritage sweets, she discovered that halwa was historically made with oils such as mustard oil rather than butter or ghee. This insight allowed her to reinterpret such recipes within a completely plant-based framework.

Ahmed's kitchen is entirely vegan. No dairy, honey, or animal products are used. Instead, ingredients such as coconut milk, jaggery, nuts, and natural oils form the foundation of her dishes.

Initially, some questioned whether traditional sweets could retain their richness without ghee or milk. Over time, however, diners have embraced the approach.

"People who are not vegan also enjoy the food," she says. "They don't feel something is missing."

One of Sanchayita's most popular desserts is sabudana kheer, made with coconut milk and jaggery rather than refined sugar. Tapioca pearls are soaked until translucent and simmered until thick, producing a rich yet balanced dessert often garnished with peanut dust.

Ahmed notes that while tapioca is celebrated globally, the Bengali name "sabudanar kheer" is sometimes dismissed as outdated. Yet, visitors, including foreigners, often respond enthusiastically to its simplicity and depth of flavour.

Alongside desserts, Ahmed revives everyday snacks such as mishti khoi, puffed rice coated in "nolen gur". She describes it as a healthier alternative to imported breakfast cereals. At home, it even serves as morning cereal for her son. "If we store it in a jar, it becomes something you can eat anytime," she says.

Presentation also plays an important role in Ahmed's work. Drawing from her background in visual arts, she plates food carefully, often using traditional moulds and vessels. This visual attention helps younger diners engage with dishes they might otherwise overlook.

"If we plate our simple foods properly," she says, "People realise how beautiful they are."

At its core, Sanchayita is less about reinventing Bengali cuisine than about restoring its confidence. Ahmed believes heritage foods should not survive only during festivals like Pahela Baishakh. Instead, they should remain part of everyday life, evolving gently while retaining their roots.

Through Sanchayita, Faiza Ahmed demonstrates that cultural preservation does not require grand gestures. Sometimes it begins with something as simple as cooking an old recipe carefully, plating it thoughtfully, and placing it back on the table.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Silvia Mahjabin

How Saira Akhter Jahan became Bangladesh's rising screen star

As an actress, she does not take lightly, her responsibility to her audiences. However, she does not take too much pressure trying to uphold a fake persona either. Valuing authentic public presence over manufactured image, she acknowledges the need to maintain presentation and communication skills for modern media while remaining true to herself.

Saira Akhter Jahan's entry into the spotlight was neither straightforward nor conventional. A Dhaka University graduate, she began by uploading photographs to Facebook as a hobby. A chance discovery by a casting director of Runout Production House catapulted her existence into instant fame. And nothing was the same again.

"I used to upload lots of pics on FB and one of my favourite casting directors, who was not known to me at the time, from Runout production house, knocked me and offered me a lot of projects," she recalls. That unexpected message opened the door to modelling, TV commercials, music videos and, eventually, her dream, films.

Her first major assignment came from advertising: a TVC for Robi.

"I was not aware of the TVC industry at all. I used to search up the production houses to see if they were genuine," Saira explains. However, she learned quickly on the job — camera angles, presence, and the practical craft that formal training had not provided. Still, she supplemented on-set learning with theatre training at an open-space troupe to enhance her acting skills.

One of her earliest and fondest breakthrough moments was the music video, "Cheep Nouko", sung by Kona and Tahsan, released in 2016. "My first work and within a minute, I was famous. The story was so simple and it really resonated with the audience," she remembers.

From commercials to music videos and short films like Leguna and Closeup's Kache Ashar Golpo, Saira grew in versatility and craft. She even took on darker territory: in the web series Ararat she played a villain, an experience that broadened her range and one she tremendously enjoyed.

Her film debut, Jonmobhumi (The Birthplace), marked a significant artistic and personal milestone. Focussed on Rohingya migration to Bangladesh, the movie demanded intensive research and immersion.

"I had to go to the Rohingya camps and learn the work and research the characters. This was difficult. I think I grew a lot and discovered new talents within myself through this work," Saira reflects.

The film's international journey, screenings at the Toronto International Film Festival, the United Nations Headquarters and the UK House of Commons, brought unexpected recognition and pride, reinforcing again, how good, local stories can connect to audiences.

Despite these successes, Saira's career faced interruptions and hard lessons. During the COVID years she stepped away, taking a job in product development at a skincare company and keeping distance from the industry because of personal issues.

"A lot of people who bumped into me. Asked me why I was not doing more of acting or modelling. I know I too enjoyed the work but I had moved on," she says. However, the pull of performance endured. Yielding to her calling, she finally returned to the screens again, at the end of 2024.

Re-entering the field proved challenging. The industry had evolved rapidly with new creators, genres and audiences. Saira's latest film, Tribunal, is a Bangladeshi courtroom drama highlighting themes of justice, political clout and morality.

"I took some time to get back into the groove, as during the gap, a lot of new people had entered the industry and started working." Saira notes. However, her previous network, many of whom are now established professionals, helped secure good roles and pull her back to her former glory. As she concentrates on her newest project, Saira remains optimistic despite ongoing obstacles.

As an actress, she does not take lightly, her responsibility to her audiences. However, she does not take too much pressure trying to uphold a fake persona either. Valuing authentic public presence over manufactured image, she acknowledges the need to maintain presentation and communication skills for modern media while remaining true to herself.

Saira is an actor who studies character work, a model who embraces physical training, and a storyteller committed to meaningful projects. Her call to the industry is straightforward- "More fair chances, properly announced opportunities and transparent auditions," she urges.

From Facebook photos to film festivals and international forums speaks of Saira Akhter Jahan's perseverance and adaptability. Not merely seeking stardom, she insists she wants to be known "not as not simply a heroine, but an actress." With the momentum she's gathered, that ambition feels well within reach.

By Munira Fidai
Photo: Sourav Kabir

#ARTS & CRAFTS

How clay is making a COMEBACK in modern Bangladeshi design

Clay often enters our lives unnoticed. It sits quietly in riverbanks, sticks to shoes after rain, and forms the base of houses in rural Bengal. Yet, in the world of contemporary design, it has been pushed aside by plastic, factory-made décor, and synthetic materials. Through Aadim, designer Chandra Manik is attempting something simple yet radical. He is bringing clay back into everyday life.

Aadim produces handmade ceramics, pottery, and fashion accessories rooted in natural materials. However, behind the brand is a personal journey shaped by childhood curiosity, observation, and a long-standing relationship with clay.

WHEN CLAY WAS JUST A CHILDHOOD TOY

Manik's relationship with clay began long before Aadim existed. During the monsoon, his mother used to collect clay from the riverbank to plaster their home. For children in the household, that clay quickly became something else.

"We used to play with that clay and make dolls," he recalls. "During festivals, when idols were being made at home, I would compete with the professional idol-makers and play with the clay." Those moments were not formal art lessons. They were simply childhood play. They planted something that stayed with him.

Although Manik eventually pursued engineering as his academic field, his interest never moved away from creative work. Drawing and writing poetry remained constant habits.

"I actually wanted to study Fine Arts," he says. "I didn't get the time or opportunity. Still, I kept practising."

That quiet practice eventually became the foundation of his work.

THE BIRTH OF AADIM

Before it became a brand, Manik worked independently. People who encountered his work online would contact him directly to collect pieces. The formal launch of Aadim happened only about two years ago.

"The journey began recently," he explains. "Before that, I worked individually. People would collect whatever they liked from my personal profile. Then Aadim was formed, and now I work regularly."

The name itself reflects a philosophy. "Aadim" suggests something primal or original. The brand embraces simple materials and forms that echo early human creativity.

DESIGNING WITH NATURE IN MIND

For Manik, the idea is closely tied to nature.

"I consider myself a child of nature," he says. "Through a bit of clay or a seed, I want people to stay close to nature even in this mechanical life." Many of the pieces are intentionally small and intimate. Clay jewellery, pins, garlands, and decorative items carry traces of seeds, natural forms, and handmade textures.

The objects are not meant to dominate attention. Instead, they quietly accompany the person wearing or holding them. Manik describes his design philosophy through an unusual image.

"I see the entire human body as a canvas," he says. "Whether it's a piece of jewellery or a small pin, it becomes part of that picture. The human body is the canvas, and ornaments are small elements of it."

WORKING ALONE, EXPERIMENTING FREELY

"From designing to stringing the beads and drilling, everything is done by me." Some days he works with clay. On others, he experiments with seeds or cloth. The direction often depends on mood as much as demand.

"Whenever I get the chance, I sit with clay," he says. "Sometimes I work on things people want. And sometimes I keep time for myself to create whatever I feel like."

Manik's training did not come primarily from institutions. Instead, it came from observation. While studying away from home, he lived near a traditional potter's house. Every day, he watched the idol-makers work.

"I would watch them from tying the straw structure to the first layer of clay and finally painting the eyes," he recalls. "I would stare and ask questions."

Later, while spending time in Kuwait, his interest in ceramics grew even deeper. "That's where my attraction to clay increased," he says. "I learned more about processing clay and different techniques."

After returning to Bangladesh, he continued refining his craft and later took training in cloth doll-making through Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation, BSCIC.

A TRADITION UNDER PRESSURE

Clay dolls and toys once played a significant role in village fairs across Bengal. Children would return home from fairs with small handmade figures. Today, those spaces are disappearing.

"There used to be month-long fairs in villages where clay toys were everywhere," Manik says. "Now they happen for a day or a few hours." At the same time, plastic toys and Western-style dolls dominate the market.

"There is definitely a challenge," he admits. "People are working with many different materials now." Yet, he remains optimistic about the place of clay.

"We are creating characters based on heritage and tradition," he says. "People look at them with interest, ask about them, and sometimes want to own them. That interest itself is valuable."

KEEPING ART ALIVE

For Manik, sustaining crafts like clay pottery requires more than individual effort. Public engagement is essential.

"First, people must feel an attraction toward art," he says. "Whether they collect it or simply appreciate it." He hopes to organise workshops and training programmes to encourage younger people to learn these crafts.

"We want the next generation to know that this is part of our tradition," he says. Media support also plays a role. "One person cannot create, promote, and reach people," he notes. "We need cooperation."

Today, Manik continues working primarily from his home in Comilla, occasionally travelling to Dhaka for exhibitions or collaborations.

Through Aadim, he creates objects that reconnect people with materials that once shaped everyday life. For him, art is not something fragile that disappears easily.

"Art has no religion," he says. "A country's identity is carried through its art and culture."

And despite changing times, he remains certain of one thing. "Art is like a flowing life," Manik says. "There will be struggles, but art will continue."

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Courtesy

Star LIFE Style

#FOOD & RECIPES

Traditional Bangladeshi dishes made easy for modern cooks

Part of rediscovering our roots involves a culinary journey, where traditional dishes get a modern twist. In a time when fast food and convenience often overshadow heritage, returning to the kitchen becomes an act of memory and reinvention.
These recipes draw from familiar flavours yet present them with subtle shifts in technique. The result is food that feels both nostalgic and new, grounded in tradition but open to interpretation.

YELLOW RICE
Ingredients
1 large tomato, cut into cubes
1 big-sized onion, cut into cubes
2 garlic cloves
1 green chilli
½ tsp turmeric powder
½ tsp paprika powder
¼ cup chopped carrot
¼ cup chopped red bell pepper
¼ cup chopped yellow bell pepper
2 cups chicken stock (one ready-made chicken stock cube diluted in two cups of water)
1 cup long-grain rice (uncooked)
¼ cup oil
Salt to taste

Method
In a grinder, put tomato, garlic, and onion. Grind together and make a smooth paste, and set aside. Heat a cooking pot with oil on medium heat. Add all the uncooked rice and fry until the grains turn slightly brown in colour. Add the tomato paste, turmeric and paprika powder, salt and chicken stock. Stir it and cover with a lid. Boil on low-medium heat until the rice is cooked properly. If needed, add extra water. Add chopped carrot, bell peppers and give a good mix, then cover the lid again and cook it for another 1-2 minutes on low heat.
Ready to serve.

PAPAYA STUFFED WITH LOTUS STEM AND CHILI CHUTNEY
Ingredients
1 Naga chilli
250g lotus stems, chopped
1 large green papaya
¼ cup chickpea powder or 'beshon mix' (add some salt and cumin powder to this)
1 tsp fenugreek (methi) seeds and mustard seeds
A pinch of turmeric and cumin powder
1 tomato (optional)
½ cup roughly ground peanuts (roast them, then grind them up roughly, not into a powder)
A pinch of coriander powder
1 tsp chopped garlic
Salt
Any cooking oil can be used
For the chilli chutney —
Take a Naga chilli and immerse it in white vinegar for about 5 days to 1 week. It loses a lot of its hotness, so it is safe to mash this up and add about 1 tablespoon of tamarind mash. Add a pinch of rock salt and 1 teaspoon jaggery, or gur. You can make this into a paste and add more chilli to your preference.

Method
In hot oil, add fenugreek and mustard seeds and let them splatter. At this point add turmeric and garlic and sauté them for about 1 minute until the turmeric loses its raw smell and the garlic has changed its colour slightly. At this point, add peanuts and coriander powder, and cook for another 1-2 minutes.

Add lotus stems and cook till they are tender. The masala seems to be coming together as the oil will start separating. At this point add tomatoes, check for salt and sauté for up to 30 seconds and if the stems look cooked you may take them off. Depending on the size of the stem, you might need to add some water and cover the pan with a lid for a few minutes.

Peel and de-seed papaya and cut it in half, along the length of the fruit, so you have 2 boat-shaped pieces. Smear these with some olive oil and stick them in the oven until they are tender. You may alternatively boil them till they are soft but do not fall apart at a touch. Sprinkle some salt on the papaya and stuff the hollow parts with the lotus stem mix. Join the two halves and smear them with a thick coating of the beshon.

Note — I would not suggest frying this as I rarely ever promote deep-fried food,

but I leave this up to you. Alternatively, stick it back into the oven and keep checking so it does not burn but the batter seems cooked. Cut the papaya up into round slices so you have a doughnut-shaped vegetable with a lotus stem filling. Pour the chilli chutney on top of this and serve it cold.

KOLAR THOR AND POTATOES
Ingredients
200g chopped banana stem. You need to peel or rather, shave the extra layer from the stem, then chop into small cubes and leave in cold water with some salt and turmeric for about 15 minutes.
250g cabbage (big leaves; you can use spinach or even pumpkin leaves)
1-2 potatoes
Pinch of turmeric, mustard seeds, coriander powder, cumin powder, cumin seeds (roasted)
1 tbsp grated garlic and ginger
1 tbsp finely chopped green chilli and 1-2 bay leaves
2-3 tomatoes, chopped
200g shrimp (optional) or any small fish
¼ cup chopped, dried mango bar (aam shotto)
Oil and salt to your preference

Method
Add the mustard and cumin seeds in oil until they splutter then add the rest of the masala ingredients and cook until the kitchen starts smelling of all the goodness. Add the banana stem and potatoes and cook for another 3-4 minutes before adding the shrimp. Cook this for another 2 minutes. You can alternatively sauté the shrimp with a bit of garlic in another pan and add them to this mix then cook for 2 minutes. Add the tomatoes and cook another minute, and cover with a bit of water, until the vegetables are well-cooked.

Now take any of the leaves you have (spinach or cabbage) and blanch them for about 30 seconds in boiling water. The cabbage takes slightly longer, up to 1 minute. Make sure you cut the hard stem part of the cabbage after it is blanched, as this will cause an obstacle while wrapping.

Take the kolar thor mix and scoop it into the leaves and wrap them around, making sure they will not split open.

Now, take a pot of boiling water and place a sieve on it. You can also use your bhapa pitha earthen pot to steam the wraps. As the food inside is already cooked, it will not take very long to steam the leaves, up to 2-3 minutes until the food inside is transparent.

Make a chutney of the mango bars. Fry them in minimal oil with some mustard seeds, and add 1 tablespoon tamarind (tetul) mix. Cook this till the oil separates. You may make it dilute or leave it thick. Adjust salt and spices.

Serve them with tomato chutney or the mango mix mentioned above.

BHAPA PULI
Ingredients
1 cup rice flour
¾ cup water
Salt to taste
For the filling —
2 cups of grated coconut
1 cup date palm jaggery

Method
Prepare the filling by cooking the grated coconut and jaggery together, stirring continuously until the mixture turns sticky.

To make the dough, boil ¾ cup of water with salt. Once it comes to a boil, add the rice flour and mix well. Allow it to cool slightly, then knead it into a smooth dough.

Roll the dough into a medium-thick roti on a rice-flour-dusted surface. Cut into small circles using any round cutter. Place a portion of the filling in the centre and seal the edges with your fingertips.

Steam the pithas for 3–4 minutes. Lightly grease the steaming tray beforehand to prevent sticking. Serve hot.

Photo: LS Archive

#PERSPECTIVE

Is it harder to make friends as an adult?

If you have already navigated your 30s, you have likely gained a wealth of experiences. You may have received promotions at the job you started in your mid-twenties, built close friendships, added a few extra inches around your waist, and perhaps even found a spouse and an extended family. Despite these developments, you might find that making new friends has become increasingly difficult.

"Back in the days, I was carefree. The only irk I can remember was probably the exams every six months, but that was it, no other burden or stress. Now I have a family to take care of, others' expectations to fulfil, and on top of that, knee pain to cure. I just can't take out the time to spend with my old friends, let alone make new ones," sighed Nowshad Kamal, a man in his mid-40s.

His statement reflects a hard truth. As our lives evolved, they embraced more and more chaos with each passing moment. When we were children, life was ridiculously simple in the best possible way. Perhaps, the biggest crisis of the day was losing a pencil or being "out" in a sport.

Even though most of us had a curfew to return home before Maghrib, our afternoons seemed to stretch on endlessly. As we said our goodbyes in the evening, we always knew we would meet the next day again and continue right where we left off.

"Friendships have gotten really complicated, just like life," sighs Ahmed Bashir, an assistant lecturer at a university. "I mean, sleepovers were basically a weekend ritual for me but now, I can't even remember when I had a proper get-together with my friends. It is not that I don't have work buddies, but the interactions are mostly very formal," he adds with a sigh.

The weekend for kids is typically airy, and why would they not be? They have no career anxiety or existential spirals about achieving life goals. In contrast, as adults, we often find that the number of formal relationships tends to outnumber genuine friendships, much like how the grey hair count escalates over shiny black ones.

"I'm a working mom, and when I drop off or pick up my son from school, I often run into groups of other moms," Farhana Yeasmine said. "I tried to befriend them, but they don't hesitate to judge each other's parenting. It's like they are in a competition over how many extra classes their kids are in. I eventually decided to leave those groups for good. Now, I just give them a polite nod, nothing more."

Adulthood certainly enhances our judgment. However, while some of us focus on minding our own business, we cannot avoid the snide remarks from others. These comments come from all directions, a reality that was unimaginable during our childhood. Back then, concepts like social status, comparison, promotion, and financial stability were not part of our vocabulary.

Talking about financial stability, this is one of the most despairing topics for a lot of adults, and I guess, life was richer when we did not have or know the value of deep pockets. Not to mention

friendships in adulthood are highly affected by it.

"After completing my BBA from the Dhaka University, I joined a renowned company, and I was doing so well that I loved reopening my bank transfer messages," Mahmud states. "However, I wanted to start something of my own, so I resigned for a new beginning. It's taking time, and while I'm okay with that, I can't shake the feeling that my friends and ex-co-workers are laughing at me. Or maybe I'm just overthinking, I don't know."

As we grow older, we become more aware of our values, boundaries, and emotional needs, and we are less willing to tolerate relationships that drain us. Unlike childhood or college friendships that often form out of proximity, adult friendships require conscious effort and mutual respect. However, it can also mean outgrowing certain friendships that no longer align with personal growth.

"I'm a divorcee. Though that is not even a tiny bit of my identity, I always feel people are judging me by this," says Lubna Alam, a school teacher. "Most women after a certain age, begin their conversations with 'Are you married?' 'What does your husband do?' or 'How many kids do you have?' If the answers are negative, they are not befriended, or I haven't met people who think differently, but who knows?"

Our society has different standards for success, and we tend to adopt these as we enter adulthood. Unfortunately, these standards can reshape our mindset, leading us to evaluate people based on them. Consequently, meeting new people and forming genuine connections can become more challenging than dealing with a receding hairline in one's 40s.

As careers become more demanding, with long hours, tight deadlines, and constant connectivity, friendships can be pushed to the wayside. When work consistently takes priority, plans are postponed, messages are left unanswered, and meeting friends becomes a luxury, which can weaken even the strongest bonds over time.

However, Shaira Haseen, an interior designer, puts it differently, "Just drop the myth that you will meet or talk to your friends daily or weekly. You are not in school anymore. Our friendships evolve as we grow up, and sometimes, they last a lifetime, even if you are not in contact regularly." Well, maybe she is right, the right kind of friendships are indeed low maintenance and don't make you feel apologetic for every missed meet-up.

Making friends in adulthood is not always as difficult as it might seem. Someone once said, "Hiking in your 40s is a great way to meet new people. Today, I met two paramedics, three nurses, and almost met the Almighty." If you smiled, congratulations, you are old, because that was a dad joke.

But in all seriousness, forming new friendships in adulthood is not impossible, even if it cannot replicate the effortless bonds we had in childhood. Ultimately, one truth remains: friendships do not just magically happen in adulthood; they require time and effort from both sides to develop.

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

#FASHION & BEAUTY

Monoshita Ayruani's practical approach to lingerie

A bra is rarely discussed as a serious design problem. It is usually treated as a private purchase, an afterthought hidden beneath clothing. Yet, for millions of women, the wrong undergarment shapes how a day unfolds. Discomfort, visible straps, or ill-fitting cups can turn into constant distractions that quietly chip away at focus and confidence.

This everyday problem is precisely where Monoshita Ayruani chose to work.

Ayruani is the founder of SHAPE, a Bangladeshi lingerie brand that focuses on bras designed for comfort, functionality, and body inclusivity.

"When I started Shape, the vision was very clear and very simple," she explains. "I wanted to make women more comfortable in their bodies."

Comfort as a design principle

Ayruani often frames her work in terms that go beyond fashion. For her, lingerie is not just about aesthetics or trends. It is about removing the physical distractions that women routinely carry throughout the day.

"Women are constantly navigating discomfort," she says. "If you are walking on a street in Dhaka, you already have to stay alert. You are aware of how people look at you, whether someone might touch you, or pull at your bag. That creates a cognitive load in your head."

That constant awareness extends into workplaces and social spaces. According to Ayruani, even small physical irritations can reduce concentration and confidence.

"If you are in a meeting and constantly adjusting your strap or your bra hurts, you are not fully present in the conversation," she explains. "Physical discomfort takes away from women's potential."

Her approach to design is therefore practical. The goal is not to create dramatic

lingerie statements but to make garments that disappear into daily life.

"The idea is to take away that cognitive load," she says. "You should not have to think about your undergarments when you are going to work, school, or even running errands."

Why seamless bras matter

One of SHAPE's core products is the seamless bra, which Ayruani describes as a solution tailored to the social and climatic realities of Bangladesh.

When worn under clothing, a seamless bra is designed to remain almost invisible. The seams are fused rather than stitched, and the materials mould naturally to the body.

"When we say seamless, we mean that when you wear it and then wear something on top of it, the bra should be practically invisible," she explains. "Invisible in terms of colour, seams, and straps."

This design responds directly to the cultural context in which many Bangladeshi women live. Visible bra straps or outlines are often treated as social mistakes rather than neutral wardrobe details.

By minimising visibility, seamless bras give women more control over what they choose to wear.

"It's about agency," she adds. "You shouldn't have to change your outfit because you don't have the right bra underneath."

The design also reflects practical considerations such as heat and humidity. In Bangladesh's climate, layering multiple undergarments under clothing can quickly become uncomfortable.

"In this weather, it doesn't make sense to wear a bra, then a chemise, then another layer before your outfit," Ayruani says. "It takes away from both comfort and aesthetics."

Challenging global standards

SHAPE also addresses a long-standing issue in lingerie design: colour.

For decades, the global industry has labelled beige tones as "nude," even though the shade primarily matches lighter skin tones. For South Asian women with darker complexions, those colours often remain visible under clothing.

Ayruani's response is subtle but deliberate.

"We don't call beige 'nude,'" she says. "Beige is beige. For brown skin tones, we introduced another shade called 'Coffee,' which actually works as a nude colour for

our bodies."

She describes this choice as a "quiet rebellion".

"It's a small way of saying that global standards don't automatically represent us," she explains.

Designing for real bodies

Another central principle behind SHAPE is fit.

Traditional lingerie retail often forces customers to adjust their bodies to limited size options. Ayruani challenges that logic directly.

"The purpose of the product is to fit you, not the other way around," she says.

Seamless bras rely on stretchable materials that adapt to changes in body shape and weight. This flexibility is especially important for women whose bodies fluctuate frequently due to hormonal cycles or lifestyle changes.

"Women's bodies change every few months," Ayruani notes. "Even during a monthly cycle, your chest expands and contracts."

Rigid underwire bras, she argues, often fail to accommodate those changes.

"If the wire is even slightly off, it presses against breast tissue and can cause pain," she explains. "I don't understand why women are expected to wear something that literally hurts their bodies."

Instead, SHAPE's products focus on softer structures that move with the body rather than forcing it into a fixed shape.

Quiet change

Much of the brand's work operates quietly. A better-fitting bra saves a few minutes in the morning. A comfortable garment removes a distraction during work. An invisible strap avoids an awkward comment at a family event.

Individually, these adjustments may seem minor. Collectively, they shift how women experience their everyday routines.

Ayruani summarises the philosophy simply — "I'm trying to remove a small burden," she says. "If women don't have to think about discomfort all day, they have more space to focus on everything else they want to do."

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Courtesy

LIFE AS IT IS

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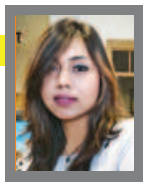

Why reading glasses become your best friend after 40

I do not feel particularly bad about getting older. Not yet! The one thing, however, that genuinely makes me sad these days is the worsening of my vision. Forties bring their own set of challenges, and one of the significant challenges that I face at this point in life is the worsening of my near vision every year after turning 40.

I can no longer read books, newspapers, menu cards, nutrition labels, and ingredient lists without my reading glasses. My optometrist prescribes higher-powered lenses after every annual eye exam to correct my worsening near vision. I expressed my worries to my optometrist, who said, "Your presbyopia (near vision loss) will continue to worsen until it stabilises around age 60."

I looked at her in disbelief because if this is indeed true, then by the time I turn 60, the only thing I might be able to read (without glasses) would be roadside billboards, provided that I do not suffer from age-related farsightedness as well.

I cannot read in the evening like I used to. Even when two lamps are giving off light in the room, I feel as if there is not enough light for me to read. Therefore, to read after sundown, I use a rechargeable book light that I can clip to the back of a book. Earlier, book lights came with cell batteries, which had to be replaced every few weeks — rechargeable ones are so much better.

But reading in the evening is no longer as much fun as it used to be. I can no longer lie on my side and enjoy a book, because my reading glasses get in the way. Also, the reading light clipped to the book slides right and left when I try reading like that.

Cell phones have become our constant companions, but without my reading glasses, it is now nearly impossible to read anything comfortably on them. To improve legibility, I have increased the text size and reduced the transparency. Also, increasing the screen's brightness when I am indoors helps greatly.

When I was young, I used to see my mother and aunts always carrying reading glasses in their handbags. They would take out their glasses every time they needed to read something or see something up close. It did not occur to me back then that I would have to do the same one day.

I must now carry my reading glasses outside if I am not accompanied by my husband or daughter. If one of these two people is with me, they usually read things for me. At a grocery store, I will just hand them a cup of yoghurt, a bar of chocolate, a bag of chips, or whatever else to read the nutrition label for me.

Presbyopia does not begin for everyone at the same age. As a result, my husband, who is slightly older than I, does not need reading glasses yet. But presbyopia affects virtually everyone, some earlier than others, typically starting in the early 40s.

Unfortunately, near vision loss is not preventable; it is a normal part of ageing. Therefore, it is a good idea to get an annual eye exam, so you can get your reading glasses in time.

If you are in your 40s and experiencing blurred vision while trying to read, be it a newspaper, online news, or product labels, you are most likely suffering from presbyopia. The earlier you get your reading glasses, the better, because very soon, you will experience headaches, eye fatigue, and also frustration over not being able to read letters and numbers.

The biggest health-related change and challenge that I have faced in my life so far is adapting to the near vision loss in my 40s; I can no longer imagine a life without reading glasses!

Photo: Collected

Star LIFE Style

VOLUME 25, ISSUE 42, TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2026, CHAITRA 17, 1432 BS
A publication of The Daily Star
E-mail: lifestyleds@yahoo.com, 64-65 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1215

#PETS

Sterilise, vaccinate, return: Inside the CNVR programme changing lives of Dhaka's street dogs

On most days in Dhaka, street dogs move through neighbourhoods almost unnoticed. They sleep beside roadside shops, wander through markets after dark, and survive on scraps. When they appear in news headlines, it is usually because of conflict. A bite incident, a complaint from residents, or a social media video of abuse.

Rarely does attention fall on the quieter work happening behind the scenes.

Furry Friends Foundation, a non-profit organisation dedicated to animal welfare in Bangladesh, is addressing the street dog issue through structured interventions rather than emotional responses. The organisation focuses on three major areas: sterilisation, vaccination, and treatment for serious illnesses among stray dogs.

A personal loss that started a movement

For Tasneem Sinha, chairperson of Furry Friends Foundation, the motivation behind the initiative began at home rather than in a policy discussion.

She had been caring for several abandoned and rescued dogs when tragedy struck. Two of the animals died from preventable diseases.

"The motivation behind establishing Furry Friends Foundation came from my personal experiences with abandoned dogs," she explains. "I had several rescued and abandoned dogs under my care. Unfortunately, one of them died from Canine Distemper and another from Canine Parvovirus. Those losses deeply affected me."

The experience forced her to confront a difficult question.

"It made me realise that if dogs who were receiving care and attention could still suffer and die from such diseases, then the situation for stray dogs living on the streets must be far worse, as they often have no one to look after them."

From that moment, the concept for Furry Friends Foundation began to take shape.

The CNVR approach

At the centre of the foundation's work is a programme known as CNVR. The acronym stands for Catch, Neuter, Vaccinate and Return.

This method is widely considered the most humane strategy for managing street dog populations. Instead of removing animals permanently or killing them, the programme stabilises their numbers over time.

Dogs are humanely captured from specific neighbourhoods and brought to the organisation's facility. There, they are sterilised so they cannot reproduce and vaccinated against diseases such as rabies. After a short recovery period, they are released back into the same area where they were found.

This territorial return is important. Dogs naturally defend their territory, so releasing sterilised animals back into the same neighbourhood prevents unsterilised dogs from moving into that space.

"The core mission of Furry Friends Foundation focuses on CNVR, vaccination, and cancer treatment for street dogs," Sinha explains. "We prioritise CNVR because it is one of the most humane and effective ways to control the street dog population."

Vaccination is another crucial part of the programme. Dogs receive rabies vaccines as well as DHPPL vaccines, which protect against a range of serious diseases, including canine distemper, hepatitis, parvovirus, parainfluenza, and leptospirosis.

Treating a disease few people know about

Another area of work that sets the organisation apart is its focus on canine cancer treatment.

Many street dogs in Bangladesh suffer from untreated tumours, particularly a disease known as Transmissible Venereal Tumour or TVT. The condition spreads through contact between dogs, and often appears as bleeding growths around the genital area.

People frequently mistake the symptoms for injuries or infections. In some cases, frightened residents attack the animals rather than seeking help.

For Sinha, this issue is deeply personal.

"As a cancer survivor myself, learning that dogs can also suffer from cancer deeply motivated me to support their treatment," she says.

Through the foundation's canine cancer treatment initiative, dogs diagnosed with such conditions receive medical care and, when possible, free treatment.

The aim is not only to save individual animals, but also to prevent disease from spreading within the street dog population.

Building a humane system

Furry Friends Foundation officially launched in January 2025, although the founders had been working informally with rescued animals before that. Much of the current funding comes from the founding members themselves, while the organisation continues to seek corporate support and partnerships.

The foundation is also exploring collaborations with local authorities to expand sterilisation and vaccination programmes across Dhaka.

But beyond logistics and funding, the organisation is trying to address something deeper: public perception.

Street dogs are often viewed as either threats or disposable animals. Changing that mindset is a long process that requires education and community engagement.

A long-term vision

For Tasneem Sinha, the work is not about charity alone. It is about building a system that allows people and animals to coexist without conflict.

"Our long-term goal at Furry Friends Foundation is to create a sustainable environment where street dogs can live healthy, safe lives, and peacefully coexist with humans in every community," she says.

The organisation hopes to expand its CNVR programmes, vaccination drives, and cancer treatment services across urban and semi-urban areas of Bangladesh.

It also plans to strengthen public awareness campaigns about responsible animal care and the importance of compassion toward stray animals.

"Ultimately," Sinha says, "our vision is a society where every stray dog is protected, healthy, and valued as part of the community."

In a country where street animals are often ignored until a crisis occurs, that vision represents a significant shift. The challenge now is turning it into a lasting reality.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Silvia Mahjabin