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DRAPE, POSE *Celebrate*

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#FYI

Is perfume stressing your HORMONES?

Scientists are taking a closer look

Perfume is often treated as a harmless finishing touch — a few sprays before stepping out, a familiar scent that signals confidence or comfort. However, recent research is prompting us to examine more closely where and how we apply it, particularly in the neck area.

Researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, have analysed commonly used perfumes and cosmetics and found that many contain chemicals such as phthalates. These compounds are widely used to make fragrances last longer, but they are also known as endocrine disruptors. That means they can interfere with the body's hormone system by mimicking or blocking natural hormones.

Hormones work through delicate signalling pathways. Even small disruptions can have cascading effects over time. Separate research cited by medical organisations like the Endocrine Society has shown that endocrine-disrupting chemicals may interfere with hormone regulation, including pathways related to thyroid function.

The thyroid plays a central role in metabolism, energy levels, mood, and temperature regulation. When its signalling is stressed repeatedly, the effects may not be immediate, but they can be cumulative.

This is where the neck becomes relevant. The skin on the neck is thinner than in many other areas of the body and is highly vascular, meaning it has a rich blood supply. Substances applied there are more readily absorbed into the bloodstream. Applying perfume directly over the thyroid area, especially daily, may increase the body's exposure to these chemicals in a way we rarely think about.

To be clear, researchers are not saying that occasional perfume use is dangerous or that fragrance should be avoided altogether. The concern is not a single spritz before a special occasion. It is repeated, long-term exposure in the same sensitive area. Over time, that exposure may add unnecessary hormonal stress, particularly for people already dealing with thyroid issues, hormonal imbalances, or heightened sensitivity to endocrine disruptors.

This issue also highlights a broader problem in personal care products: regulation often focuses on immediate toxicity, not long-term hormonal effects. Many fragrance formulas are protected as trade secrets, meaning consumers rarely know exactly what chemicals they are being exposed to.

What feels benign because it smells pleasant may still carry biological consequences that are invisible in the short term.

Small changes can reduce risk without sacrificing personal preference. Applying perfume to clothing instead of skin, or choosing areas with thicker skin, such as the wrists, may lower absorption. Opting for fragrance-free or transparently labelled products can also reduce cumulative exposure. These are not dramatic lifestyle overhauls, but practical adjustments based on what science is beginning to reveal.

The takeaway is not fear, but awareness. Our daily routines shape our health in quiet ways. Perfume will likely remain part of many people's lives, but understanding how the body interacts with what we apply to it allows us to make more informed choices. Sometimes, protecting hormonal health starts with simply changing where we spray.

- LS DESK

#SOCIALISSUES

The abuse in everyday body talk

From 'concerned' relatives to friends, everyone seems to have opinions on your health. Some of us learn to grow a thick skin. Others turn to extreme measures — sometimes at the expense of their own well-being.

We have normalised discussing people's bodies because we have had it done to ourselves. So much so that we think it's okay for our friends to speak ill of our bodies, even as a joke. During such conversations, we must assertively verbalise the negative impact to maintain healthy boundaries

Just last year, a makeup artist went on a one-meal-a-day (OMAD) diet, as a result of being bullied online. Upon losing 42 kilos in six months, her followers lauded her efforts. However, her life was abruptly cut short due to the recurring health issues resulting from extreme dieting.

This says something sinister about our society. Anyone who looks shiny on the surface can exist. And whoever doesn't, can EXIT. On this issue, behaviour and fitness specialists explain the gaps in social and cultural systems.

CONCERN OR ABUSE: READING BETWEEN THE LINES

Historically, behaviour science theories such as Social Identity or Self-Perception have found that humans seek out connection and belonging. We develop our personalities based on what our peers are doing and how they perceive us.

Tasfia Tamkin Reza, Psychological Counsellor at PHWC, says, "The frequency of these behaviours from adults reconfirms to children that people are judged based on their looks and they must exist in society by appeasing others."

According to the counsellor, children who have experienced long-term body shaming commonly have symptoms of anxiety, depression and low self-esteem because they feel undervalued. This also impacts their social, professional and romantic relationships because they believe that they were not dealt the same cards as their peers.

Social media further exploits these insecurities by promoting aesthetic beauty and fitness trends, which are impossible to maintain for ordinary people. This is why many people suffer from eating disorders such as Bulimia Nervosa and Anorexia. They also have crippling Body Dysmorphia, which has them aspiring for unattainable physical features, such as having a perfect jawline.

Unfortunately, body shaming is seared into our culture. So much so that it resurfaces even in daily conversations.

Tasfia recommends self-reflection before passing a comment about someone's weight gain or loss, or changing skin colour.

"We have normalised discussing people's bodies because we have had it done to ourselves. So much so that we think it's okay for our friends to speak ill of our bodies, even as a joke. During such conversations, we must assertively verbalise the negative impact to maintain healthy boundaries," she emphasises.

Aside from this, we have a tendency to participate in negative self-talk regularly. Health and functionality should be the primary focus as opposed to looks. If we continue to comment about our weight in front of children, they only learn to internalise that large bodies are 'bad'.

Tasfia suggests revising the narrative so that having a sedentary lifestyle can lead to health risks, irrespective of one's size. "These conversations equip children with respect towards their own bodies as well as others who are different from them— so that they can refrain from bullying others or being bullied themselves," she adds.

Tasfia shares that the ideal way to show concern about someone's health is by asking about it, provided you have a close relationship with them. Instead of jumping to conclusions that their body type is an indicator of underlying health issues. If it is proven that they are actually struggling with weight, then one can recommend lifestyle changes that might benefit them, ONLY if they have asked for help.

Some people may not have a health problem; it may just be their genetics. Even people who go to the gym struggle with chronic illnesses. Therefore, it's necessary not to make snap judgments about people's appearance or immunity just because they do not fit into the cultural definitions of "healthy" and "unhealthy".

Tasfia ends on the note that emotional intelligence often triumphs over BMI and appearance. "It is important to value people's empathy, accountability, kindness, creativity, resilience and sense of humour. That's what makes them relatable and easier to connect with others."

FUNCTIONALITY OVER FADS: FITNESS SIMPLIFIED

National Academy of Sports Medicine (NASM) Certified Personal Trainer (CPT), Mohammed Asad, Founder and Head Fitness Coach at GOFIT, explains that the language and marketing used in our fitness industry often emphasise that a six-pack abs is the goal physique for ordinary people.

The dearth of information and skilled professionals still has us consulting people who have no academic or professional background in anatomy, medicine, nutrition, or kinesiology. Even in gyms, some trainers assume that all overweight people are lazy. Other times, even gym members feel the need to dish out their diet to those with larger bodies, or even compliment them for extreme weight loss.

Without due diligence on the trainer's certification, many people fall victim to commercial fitness packages.

"People with pre-existing conditions such as diabetes or chronic pain are often duped into following workout regimes or taking supplements. As a result, men lean towards taking performance enhancers such as steroids to build muscles and women are conned into doing extreme crash diets to stay skinny. These ultimately cause hormonal and metabolic deficiencies in the body," says Asad.

Coach Asad takes an empathetic approach to training clients who struggle with body image issues. Instead of focusing on their weight, he appreciates how far they have come in terms of strength and progress. More importantly, he refrains from commenting on their bodies, unless they allow him to.

"One of my clients was unsure about her achievements, till I reminded her how she's able to lift heavier while doing squats. She was also able to manage her knee pain and gain more stamina when climbing a flight of stairs," he shares.

Having been in the industry for more than 12 years, Asad truly believes that strength training can better support health in both genders, if done correctly.

"Most of my clients are women; many of them initially thought lifting weights would make them manly. I explain to them that men and women can do the same exercises, but the result will vary from each other due to their hormonal differences," he highlights. Now many of his clients can confidently do deadlifts, squats, push-ups and pull-ups and are enthusiastic to learn new exercises.

According to Asad, trainers should focus on progress, mobility, and strength, and educate clients on general nutrition and not give medical or nutrition therapy.

"I know how to calculate the macro and micronutrients when I am giving a diet plan to clients. However, if an individual has chronic illnesses, I will recommend them to consult their doctor or nutritionist aligned with their conditions," clarifies Asad. He concludes by saying that the onus is on trainers to teach people that fitness is not a punishment for how we look, but rather a long-term investment for our future health.

By: Rubab Nayeem Khan
Photo: Collected

#INTERVIEW

How Ismail Hossain Brought Bangladeshi Flavours to MasterChef UK

Seeing Ismail Hossain reach the semi-finals of MasterChef UK is a moment of pride. He carried the soul of Bangladeshi cuisine to one of the world's most prestigious culinary competitions, and in this exclusive interview with The Daily Star, Ismail Hossain shares his unexpected journey and the deep-rooted stories behind his success.

When Ismail Hossain walked into the MasterChef: The Professionals kitchen this year, he did not arrive with a lifelong dream of becoming a chef but with something far more meaningful — memories!

"Back in Bangladesh, I never dreamt of becoming a chef," he shares. "I just simply loved food; I used to help my mother in the kitchen, especially during Ramadan, but that had nothing to do with wanting to become a chef."

Family gatherings, outings with friends, roaming around for street food — these early memories quietly shaped his understanding of flavours, even if he did not realise it back then.

Hossain's journey into cooking began when he moved to London. Like many young Bangladeshis abroad, he started from scratch. He learned from his flatmates by observing and helping them with tasks such as chopping and cleaning.

After a few months, he was slowly picking up the basics. The turning point came when a friend invited him to work at a restaurant. And that's where he met the first head chef, James Knight.

He was amazed by how Knight made a dish with twenty different components and transformed simple dishes into something extraordinary.

From that point onwards, his love for cooking gradually started to grow, and it became something he wanted to master.

Ever since, Ismail has worked in British, Mexican, Mediterranean, and Spanish kitchens and developed a diverse culinary foundation, eventually rising to head chef. Notably, he has never worked in any Bangladeshi or Indian restaurant, which makes his understanding of the flavours more remarkable.

"I learned about all the spices from my mother and books," he says.

His family's reaction to his career choice changed over time. While his brother was supportive from day one and encouraged him to pursue whatever he wanted, others were more sceptical.

"No one said it on my face, but I felt the word 'baburchi' cross their minds at least once," he admits smilingly.

That perception began to evolve when one of his cousins witnessed his professional environment and shared positivity with the family.

Now, Ismail approaches cooking as something of continuous learning. "Being a chef is like being a lawyer; you have to keep studying," he stated. "Trends change, flavours evolve, and with that you must grow."

He believed it, and he also taught all the newcomers about this rule. His dedication to improving a dish involves thorough analysis, trying to break down the spices, and continuously refining his techniques.

Despite his experience, it is his Bangladeshi roots that define his culinary identity. On MasterChef, he presented beef rib bhuna and haleem, two deeply personal dishes that have the core memories and essence of his roots.

His beef rib bhuna is inspired by his childhood memories. Growing up in a middle-class family, Friday was always special to him. After the Jummah prayer, he loved entering the house filled with an irresistible aroma.

The same goes for his haleem dish. It was very personal and holds a core memory, recalling the nights when he and his brother spent waiting eagerly for his father to bring home haleem from Dhaka.

"My journey is fully rooted in Bangladesh," he says. "If I didn't grow up in that food-centred culture, I wouldn't be here today."

Representing local cuisine on a prestigious platform holds deep meaning for him. Many of the judges were unfamiliar with authentic Bangladeshi cuisine, but through his cooking, Ismail introduced them to the flavours of the land and became a cultural ambassador.

"They did not know what Bangladeshi food truly was, but now they do, because of me," he says with a sense of pride.

He also hopes to change the societal norms of Bangladesh through his platform.

"Cooking is a basic skill and for everyone," he says firmly.

It is a powerful message that reflects his wish to reshape perceptions within Bangladeshi households.

From a young boy who simply loved food to a chef who is representing his country and culture on an international stage, his journey is nothing short of extraordinary.

By Faria Nowshin Tazin
Photo: Courtesy

#PROFILE

FROM KITCHEN LINES TO CLASSROOMS

The expanding world of Nayeem Ashraf

Most people do not leave a stable future to enter a kitchen. Chef Nayeem Ashraf did exactly that.

At a time when a degree from Canada usually leads to structured careers and predictable outcomes, he chose something far less defined. Not because it was glamorous, but because it felt real.

"It actually started as a part-time job," he says. "I was working in restaurants while studying, and over time, I realised I was enjoying that more than what I was studying."

That quiet realisation would go on to disrupt everything expected of him.

From marketing graduate to kitchen line

Ashraf completed his studies in marketing in Canada. By most standards, he had done everything right. But instead of entering the corporate world, he stayed back and continued working in kitchens.

"I had already started building experience there," he explains. "So, after graduation, I just continued."

When he returned to Bangladesh, the plan was different. His family expected him to join the family business. It was stable, familiar, and made sense. But it did not feel right.

"I tried, but I didn't enjoy it," he says simply. "My heart was in the kitchen." That sentence, understated but firm, defined his next step.

Choosing a career that didn't yet exist

The challenge was not just personal. It was social.

At that time, being a chef was not widely seen as a serious profession in Bangladesh. The word "cook" carried little prestige, and the idea of pursuing it after studying abroad felt like a step backwards to many.

Convincing his family took time.

"I told my father, help me this one time," he recalls. "I'll come back and prove that this was the right decision." He went on to study at Le Cordon Bleu, where for the first time, he found himself fully engaged.

"In school, I was not a very good student before," he admits. "But there, I was among the top. Because I was actually interested." It was not just training. It was clarity.

The reality of the local industry

After graduating, he interned at Nobu, where he experienced a completely different kind of kitchen. "There was structure. There were systems. Everyone knew what they were doing," he shares.

It was a professional environment where discipline and respect for craft were non-negotiable. It also showed him what the industry could look like at its best. But instead of staying, he chose to return.

"I knew that if I stayed abroad, I would just be another chef there," he reflects. "But here, there was something to build."

Coming back to Dhaka exposed a gap between training and practice. "I had a bit of a kitchen shock," he admits.

Kitchens lacked structure, standardisation, and trained professionals. "Most people had learned through experience, not education. And that creates gaps," he explains.

The working conditions were equally revealing. Long hours, low pay, and little recognition were normalised. "People were working ten to twelve hours a day, no holidays, and they didn't even question it," he says.

For him, the issue was not just operational. It was systemic.

Rather than stepping away, he chose to engage directly with the industry. Through his work in restaurant kitchens and later in his own ventures, he began introducing structure, consistency, and training.

His most personal expression of this approach came with the launch of his restaurant, Ciao.

Ciao was not just a business idea. It was a long-held intention shaped during his years abroad. "As a chef, it's everyone's dream to have their own restaurant," he says. "I wanted a place that would reflect my personal journey."

The restaurant focuses on Italian cuisine, but its core philosophy is rooted in discipline and simplicity. Fresh ingredients define the menu. "Everything is done fresh, day by day. We buy ingredients every morning," he explains. Even the dough follows a strict process, fermented for seventy-two hours to achieve the desired texture.

SHINEE: Creating a system that did not exist

Alongside his restaurant, Ashraf addressed what he saw as the root issue in the industry: lack of education.

In 2022, he founded the School of Hospitality Integrated Education Epicenter (SHINEE) with the aim of building trained professionals rather than informal workers.

"I didn't want to create just cooks," he explains. "I wanted to create chefs who understand what they're doing."

The school focuses on technical training, discipline, and professional awareness. Students are taught not just how to cook, but how kitchens function, how systems operate, and how to think about food critically.

"If you are educated, you understand your value," he elaborates. "Then you can ask for better conditions and respect."

Redefining the profession

Chef Nayeem Ashraf's journey sits within a larger shift taking place in Bangladesh. The definition of a chef is changing from a background role to a recognised profession built on skill, education, and structure.

"People still think being a chef is just cooking," he says. "But it's discipline, knowledge, and management."

His work across restaurants and education reflects that complexity. He is not only running a kitchen or teaching students. He is contributing to the formation of an industry that is still developing.

"I could have stayed abroad," he says. "However, I felt there was more impact here."

That decision continues to shape everything he builds.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Courtesy

#FASHION & BEAUTY

In Bangladesh, celebration arrives layered in colours; bold, expressive, and deeply intertwined with emotion, memory, and identity. Festivals here are experienced through a spectrum that feels almost instinctive. Whether it is the soft bloom of spring, the electric energy of Bengali new year, or the luminous nights of Eid and Puja, colour becomes both the language and the mood of festivity.

Star LIFE Style

Colours galore in festivals of Bangladesh

The cycle begins with Falgun, where the country gently eases into celebration. There is a softness to its palette — yellows that mirror mustard fields, marigold orange, and greens that hint at new life. Unlike other festivals, Falgun feels as though it has been borrowed directly from the landscape. The festivities bring the kind of optimism that can be expected from the warmth of the sun after a cold winter. It is less about spectacle and more about renewal, where colour reflects nature rather than outshining it.

That restraint dissolves entirely with Pahela Baishakh.

If Falgun is a whisper, Baishakh is a declaration. Traditionally, red and white have held a symbolic stronghold, representing purity, hope, and the cyclical promise of beginnings. Yet, over time, Baishakh has expanded beyond this classic pairing into something far more dynamic. Today, it is brightness that defines the festival more than any singular colour scheme.

The streets transform into moving canvases, where vivid yellows, blues, striking oranges and lush greens compete for attention. Processions and public celebrations embrace an almost maximalist approach, drawing inspiration from folk art and everyday visual culture. It is no longer just about adhering to tradition, but about amplifying it. In that sense, Baishakh has become a reflection of contemporary Bangladesh itself.

Running parallel to this season of renewal is the lesser-highlighted yet equally evocative Boishabi festival of the indigenous communities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Unlike the structured palettes of mainstream celebrations, Boishabi feels fluid in its use of colour. It is shaped by water, flowers, and the surrounding hills, where splashes appear in fleeting, almost playful forms.

The vibrancy here is lived in every moment, emerging through rituals that celebrate cleansing, transition, and harmony with nature. It quietly reinforces a recurring theme across Bangladeshi festivals: colour is never artificial; it is always connected to the land.

As the year unfolds, Eid introduces a different kind of chromatic expression. If Baishakh thrives in daylight brilliance, Eid belongs to the glow of evening.

Its colours are richer, deeper, and more indulgent — think jewel tones that catch the light, metallic accents that shimmer after dusk, and an overall sense of warmth. There is a tactile quality to Eid's palette, where colour feels almost luxurious. It mirrors the mood of the festival itself: celebratory, intimate, and layered with a sense of occasion.

Durga Puja, on the other hand, is perhaps one of the most visually immersive festivals in Bangladesh. Its colour palette is intricate, blending sacred symbolism with artistic grandeur.

The deep reds representing sindoor, the golds of ornate decorations, and the kaleidoscopic hues of pandals come together to create an atmosphere that is both devotional and theatrical. Colour here moves, shifts, and transforms with each ritual, each day of celebration.

Christmas has perhaps seen the biggest rise in its popularity in the last decade or so in Bangladesh. Festive colours take on a universal language — reds, greens, whites, and touches of gold that feel instantly recognisable, yet seamlessly adapted into the local context. There is a warmth to it, a sense of festivity that transcends boundaries. It blends global influences with local sensibilities, much like the festival itself.

What is perhaps most striking across all these celebrations is their shared accessibility.

In Bangladesh, festivals rarely remain confined within religious lines. They spill over, inviting participation, admiration, and connection from people of all backgrounds. A Muslim family may revel in the colours of Puja, just as a Hindu household might embrace the vibrancy of Eid or Baishakh. This fluidity creates a cultural landscape where colour becomes a unifying force — an unspoken bridge between communities.

Underlying this shared celebration is a deep-rooted connection to nature. The colours that dominate festivals are rarely arbitrary. They echo seasonal shifts, agricultural rhythms, and the natural world that shapes everyday life. From the yellows of spring blossoms to the fiery reds of summer heat, from the earthy tones of harvest to the cool hues of winter evenings, there is a continuity that ties festivity to environment. It is this connection that gives Bangladeshi celebrations their authenticity — an ability to feel both grounded and exuberant at once.

In the end, the colours of Bangladesh's festivals always tell stories of change and continuity, of individuality and unity, of tradition and reinvention. They remind us that celebration, at its core, is about feeling — about marking moments in ways that are vivid, memorable, and shared.

And in Bangladesh, nothing captures that spirit quite like colour.

By Nusrath Jahan
Photo: Salek Bin Taher
Models: Anushka Chakma, Samudra Chakma, Kreesti Dewan, Riddhi Tanchangya, Shreejani Chakma
Fashion Direction: Salek Bin Taher
Wardrobe: Sozpodor by Tenzing
Jewellery: 6 Yards Story
Photo Assistant: Maruf
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#TRADE

Understanding the business of silver in Old Dhaka

Neel Paul does not look up immediately when someone enters the workshop. His hands remain steady, bent over a thin strip of silver, filing its edge with precision born of repetition rather than instruction. When asked how long he has been in this business, he answers, "Thirty years... more than that now," after a pause, without breaking rhythm.

This is a common scene in Tantibazar, tucked within the dense fabric of Old Dhaka. The word "tanti" may suggest weaving, textiles, or threads. However, the bazaar has long shifted its identity. It is now a centre of gold and silver, where they are stocked, traded, negotiated, and constantly recalculated. And though gold draws attention, it is the silver that sustains the system.

Purchasing silver at Tantibazar: What buyers need to know

Tantibazar's name carries its past. Once associated with weavers, the area evolved as Bengal's textile economy declined. Historical accounts trace how gold and silver entered the region through trade tied to Muslin and silk. When that system weakened, many weaving families transitioned into jewellery-making.

Today, most businesses here are run by Hindu families who have remained in the trade for decades. Shops like Sarkar Silver House are often identified among the oldest, representing continuity rather than reinvention.

"There is one very common design that sells very well; it's called the Komol Nupur," says a representative from Sarkar Silver House, referring to a lotus-inspired anklet available in multiple versions, including smaller ones for children.

The silver market is broader. It is not limited to investment but is also tied to affordability.

"Who usually uses silver?" the representative asks, before answering his own question. "Generally, the middle class." This shapes demand. When prices rise, sales slow. "In that situation, jewellery is a luxury… our business is a bit slow right now."

Buying silver jewellery in Tantibazar requires attention to detail.

"Tk 5500 to 6200 or more," a representative from Comilla Silver Store says when asked about the silver's current general price per bhori. But this is not a fixed number. "There are categories here."

Purity is the first distinction. "Hallmarked silver carries a slightly higher price, often "Tk 130 to 150 higher" than regular rates.

Lower-purity silver contains alloys, which reduce both price and durability. "The ones that have alloys, the price decreases step by step."

Appearance is another factor. "Silver is naturally white. It will turn black after you use it for a while," he explains. Tarnishing is not a flaw. It is a natural reaction.

Making charges adds another layer. These are rarely fixed. They depend on design complexity, labour, and negotiation. In a market like Tantibazar, pricing is fluid. It responds to conversation as much as calculation.

Wholesale networks and market pressure

Tantibazar operates beyond individual buyers. A significant portion of its business is wholesale.

"Those in the surrounding areas mainly buy wholesale," a shop owner notes.

Jewellery produced here travels across Bangladesh, reaching smaller markets and shops.

Margins are often narrow. "We sell it by keeping our usual margin of Tk 50 or 100." Stability depends on volume.

But the system is vulnerable. Price fluctuations in gold and silver create an immediate impact. "Almost 80 to 90 per cent of businessmen are currently suffering a loss," he says. Inventory purchased at higher rates becomes difficult to sell when prices drop.

"Business is business," he adds. "Sometimes there's profit, sometimes there's loss."

Inside the workshop: The four stages of craft

The structure of Tantibazar separates the act of making from the act of selling.

Workshops are hidden, often cramped, while showrooms are open and well-lit. When asked about the process, one craftsman redirects the question. "If you go inside, you'll get a better idea."

The jewellery displayed in shops is only the outcome of a structured process. It unfolds in four stages.

The first is melting. Raw gold or silver is heated and reshaped into sheets or wires. The second stage involves initial design, where form and proportion are defined. The third stage uses dies –tools that allow intricate designs to be replicated with consistency. The final stage is finishing, known as Meenakari, or Minakari, where polishing, filing, and colouring complete the piece.

Different workers handle each stage. The process is collective, not individual.

Sujon, who has been part of this system for over two decades, works at the final stage. "I've been here for 21 years," he says, seated at a compact workstation. His role is specific. "Colouring is done here… Meenakari."

The work requires precision. "By colours, I mean a liquid colour applied on jewellery, like resin," he explains. What appears decorative from the outside is technically demanding. "Yes, it is delicate work."

Training follows informal lines. "The person I learned it from has passed away," he says. Not a formal instructor. "He was my maternal uncle." The craft moves through families, through observation, through repetition.

Reading beyond the surface

For those entering Tantibazar to buy silver, the experience can be both straightforward and misleading. Prices may seem transparent, but they are layered.

Purity, weight, making charges, and design all contribute to the final cost, and not all of them are immediately visible. It helps to ask directly about Hallmark certification, to understand whether the piece contains alloys, and to clarify making charges before committing to a purchase.

Observing the finish, whether the joints are secure, and whether the detailing is consistent, can reveal more than the price itself. Tarnishing should not be mistaken for poor quality; in many cases, it confirms authenticity. Most importantly, negotiation is expected.

A buyer who understands how silver is priced and made is not just purchasing an object, but navigating a system – one where knowledge often determines value as much as the metal itself.

By Ayman Anika
Photo: Nafis Ahamed Khan

Special Supplement

Project `Trishna':
Ensuring Safe Drinking Water for One Lakh People Every Day

For many communities across Bangladesh, access to a glass of safe drinking water is still a distant dream. The lack of clean water continues to expose countless people to waterborne diseases, long-term health complications and financial hardship due to medical expenses. From schoolchildren in rural areas to patients admitted to hospitals in cities and even their waiting family members- unsafe water silently affects lives every day. Illness-related absenteeism in schools, increased health risks in medical facilities and preventable suffering often stem from this basic crisis of safe water.

Recognizing this urgent reality, Prime Bank PLC. has taken a meaningful step to address one of humanity's most fundamental needs- safe drinking water. With the support of the private development organization Footsteps, the bank has launched Project `Trishna', a large-scale initiative dedicated to ensuring access to safe water in high-risk and high-need areas. Under this project, nearly 100,000 people- including school students and hospital patients- are receiving safe drinking water every day across Kushtia, Tangail, Narayanganj, Dhaka, Sunamganj and Chattogram. More than just a water purification effort, Project Trishna has become a symbol of health, awareness and human dignity.

The core objective of Project Trishna is simple yet powerful: to ensure safe water where people are most vulnerable. By prioritizing schools and hospitals, the initiative directly supports two critical pillars of society- education and healthcare. Currently, approximately one lakh individuals benefit daily from purified water under the project. This includes 8,680 students from 20 government schools, around 75,000 people from 26,000 neighboring families and nearly 20,500 patients and healthcare workers in six hospitals in Dhaka. Beyond these numbers lie thousands of transformed lives and stories of renewed hope.

Access to safe water in schools has brought visible and measurable change. Previously, many children frequently suffered from waterborne illnesses, leading to irregular attendance and disrupted learning. Since the implementation of Project Trishna, students are noticeably healthier, attendance rates have improved and concentration levels in classrooms have increased. A shining example is Suabil Government Primary School in Fatikchhari, Chattogram. According to teacher Abul Mohammad Kalam, many students used to fall sick regularly and struggled to attend classes consistently. After the introduction of Project Trishna, the situation began to improve significantly. Students now understand the importance of safe water and have become more health-conscious. For them, clean water is no longer just a means to quench thirst- it is a condition for staying healthy and continuing their education.

The impact of the project extends far beyond school premises. Through students, the message of safe water usage is reaching surrounding households and communities. The school-based purification systems benefit approximately 26,000 additional families living nearby. Many of these families have become more aware of water quality and hygiene practices. Children are emerging as health ambassadors within their homes, encouraging safer habits and helping lay the foundation for a healthier future generation.

Project Trishna's contribution to the healthcare sector is equally significant. In six hospitals in Dhaka, purified water systems now provide safe drinking water to nearly 20,500 patients, healthcare professionals and attendants every day. In hospital environments, water quality is directly linked to infection control, patient recovery and overall treatment safety. Fatema Akter, a caregiver at Bangladesh Medical University, noted that access to safe water in the capital has long been a daily challenge. Previously, patients and their families had to purchase bottled water from outside the hospital premises. Project Trishna has greatly reduced this hardship by ensuring reliable access to purified water within hospital facilities, offering comfort and convenience to both patients and staff.

Speaking about the initiative, Md. Ziaur Rahman, Deputy Managing Director (DMD) and Chief Risk Officer (CRO) of Prime Bank PLC, emphasized the deeper significance of the project, `A glass of pure water does more than quench thirst- it protects a child from illness and increases a patient's chance of recovery. During our field visits, we witnessed how the lack of safe water silently affects ordinary people's lives. Project Trishna is our effort to ease that suffering. At Prime Bank, we believe that sustainable development requires not only effective risk management but also strong social responsibility. This project reflects that philosophy. For us, it is not merely a CSR activity- it is a responsibility connected to people's lives. The smile of a schoolchild and the relief of a hospital patient are our greatest achievements. If we can provide safe water to a child today, we believe we are contributing to a healthier, more aware and humane Bangladesh tomorrow. We hope Project Trishna will gradually evolve into a nationwide awareness movement and bring positive change to even more lives.'

Looking ahead, Prime Bank plans to expand Project Trishna to more schools, hospitals and communities across the country. Because safe water is not only about health protection- it is about education, awareness and human dignity. A single drop of pure water can protect a child from illness, just as a responsible initiative can transform thousands of lives. Project Trishna continues to write that story of transformation every day- quietly, yet with profound and lasting impact.

#FYI

Are video games really bad for children? What research says

Video games are deeply woven into the daily routines of many young people, especially boys and young men. They are social spaces, entertainment, and in some cases, competitive arenas. But they are also divisive. Parents, educators and policymakers often worry about screen time, violence, addiction and social withdrawal. Yet recent research suggests the story is not as simple as "good" or "bad."

A growing body of scientific evidence, including work cited by researchers at the University of Oxford, points out that playing video games does not inherently harm children and may even carry benefits. Traditional concerns like aggression and poor academic performance are not consistently supported by solid data when other factors are accounted for. Instead, outcomes vary widely depending on how, why, and how much games are played.

One area researchers highlight is cognitive development. Many games require sustained attention, quick decision-making, pattern recognition and strategic thinking. Some studies show improvements in visual processing and hand-eye coordination among regular players. These aren't fringe findings — controlled experiments have demonstrated that even short bouts of action gaming can enhance certain visual and attentional skills.

This does not mean every game will boost intelligence, but it does challenge the assumption that gaming is always a waste of time.

Social interaction is another misunderstood aspect. Online games often involve teamwork, communication and problem-solving with others. For some children, especially those who struggle socially in school, games provide a context to build friendships.

Critics point to "isolation," but the Oxford research notes that many players maintain real-world relationships through gaming communities. This does not replace in-person interaction, but it does add another layer to social development rather than subtracting from it.

Mental health impacts are more nuanced. Heavy use can correlate with anxiety or depression, but research suggests this is more likely when gaming displaces other aspects of life — sleep, schoolwork, physical activity — rather than because of gaming itself. In other words, it's the pattern of use that matters more than the games.

The New York Times analysis of national data on boys and young men echoes this complexity. Gaming correlates with better self-reported enjoyment and leisure satisfaction, but it also intersects with real-world issues like education and employment. For some boys, gaming becomes a refuge from stress or social challenges. That can be adaptive in the short term, but problematic if it becomes avoidance rather than engagement with life responsibilities.

So, what should parents take away from this?

First, context matters. A child who plays games for an hour a day and balances hobbies, school and sleep is likely to experience very different effects than one who plays compulsively for many hours at the expense of everything else.

Second, not all games are the same. Puzzle, strategy, adventure and simulation games engage different cognitive skills than fast-paced shooters. What a child plays — and why they choose to play — matters more than simply how much.

Third, gaming is not inherently harmful. When monitored and balanced with other activities, it can be a source of enjoyment, social connection and even cognitive stimulation.

Research is continuing, and there are legitimate concerns around extremes of use. But the evidence suggests that video games are not inherently bad for kids. Like many activities, they carry potential benefits and risks, and understanding which is which depends on paying attention to patterns of use, not assumptions about screens.

- LS DESK

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#TRAVEL

5 nature daytrips from Chattogram City

Cox's Bazar

Bandarban

Cox's Bazar

Chattogram is often celebrated as Bangladesh's bustling port city, a commercial hub where ships dock, and businesses thrive. Beyond the cranes and cargo lies a landscape of rare diversity, a treasure of natural escapes. Within just a few hours' drive, the city opens up to serene beaches, rolling hills, and hidden waterfalls that offer a perfect break from the everyday rush.

Whether you are chasing the calm of a quiet lake or the simple joy of watching the sun dip into the sea, these 5 daytrips from Chattogram city promise a mix of adventure, tranquillity, and stunning scenery, all easily achievable within a single day!

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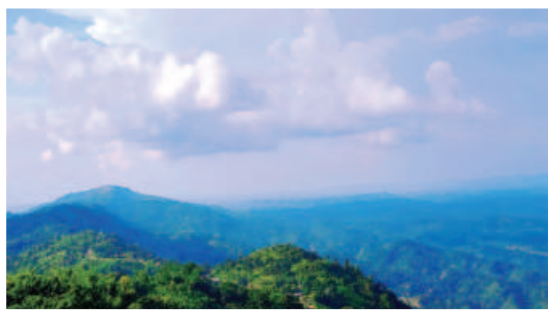

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Guliakhali Sea Beach, Sitakunda

COX'S BAZAR

Most people treat Cox's Bazar as a weekend getaway. However, for a day trip, an early start ensures you reach the beach by late morning, giving plenty of time to stroll along the golden sand, drench your feet in the waves, or simply watch the endless horizon.

As the afternoon unfolds, the beach's lively energy softens into a smooth rhythm. You can walk toward the quieter corners of Kalatali to avoid the heavy crowds. Find a soft spot near Laboni Point to catch the sunset before heading back to the city. Even in a single day, Cox's Bazar manages to capture the magic of the sea and the charm of coastal life.

BANDARBAN

Bandarban offers an adventurous escape just a few hours from Chattogram city. You can take in the sweeping views from Nilachal, standing on the edge of the clouds where the rolling greens and misty skylines set the tone for the day. A short drive from Nilachal leads to Shoilopropat Waterfall, a perfect place for simply soaking in the sounds of rushing water.

Nearby, Rupali Waterfall adds a splash of charm with its silvery sheet of water tumbling over smooth rocks. With each stop, the hills reveal their hidden corners, from forest paths to panoramic viewpoints, making the day feel both active and refreshing. By late afternoon, a slow return through the winding roads leaves you with the perfect blend of adventure and greenery.

SITAKUNDA

Sitakunda is the ultimate destination for those who want a diverse natural experience. Starting the day at Banshbaria Sea Beach, the iconic bamboo bridge stretching into the sea creates a striking first impression. A short drive away, Guliakhali Sea Beach presents a contrasting landscape, where grassy fields meet the shoreline, offering a unique setting for a relaxed walk.

For those seeking quieter corners, Akilpur Sea Beach is ideal for a barefoot walk. As the day progresses, heading towards Bhatiary Lake brings a change of pace, perfect for a slow boat ride or a picnic on the grassy banks. Ending the day at the nearby sunset point, watching the sky shift colours over the hills and water, ties together a day filled with variety and restful moments in nature.

MIRSHARAI

For those looking to trade peaceful views for a bit of adventure, Mirsharai offers a refreshing change of pace. The Napittachora Trail leads to a series of hidden waterfalls tucked deep within nature. The journey involves walking through shallow streams and green valleys that make you feel like a true explorer in the wild and create an immersive escape.

After the trek, a visit to Mohamaya Lake brings a calmer rhythm to the day. It is the second largest manmade lake in the country. Surrounded by hills, the expansive lake is ideal for simply sitting by the water and unwinding. The contrast between the thrill of the trail and the stillness of the lake makes Mirsharai a well-rounded day trip for those seeking both movement and moments of pause.

RANGAMATI

Rangamati offers a slower and scenic getaway. At the heart of the experience is Kaptai Lake, where a boat ride across the lake reveals changing landscapes at every turn. The endless water meeting the distant mountains provides an immediate sense of peace. You can spend a couple of hours floating on the lake and enjoying.

One of the popular stops along the way is Shuvolong Waterfall, which drops from massive rocky cliffs. The surroundings, gentle breeze and uninterrupted views make Rangamati ideal for those seeking a peaceful retreat, wrapping up the day with a sense of quiet fulfilment before heading back to the city.

By Mir Elham Bin Ahmed
Photo: LS Archive/ Tanzeel/ Tanjil/ Collected

Kaptai Lake, Rangamati