

IBA BBA/MBA PAST YEAR – IDIOMS AND PHRASES

A Brush with the Law – A brief encounter or trouble with legal authorities

Raju had a **brush with the law** last year when he unknowingly rode his bike without a proper license. Although it was just a minor mistake, it taught him a valuable lesson about following rules. Many young people in Bangladesh often have similar experiences—be it driving without a helmet or breaking traffic laws. Instead of learning the hard way, it's better to stay informed and cautious. Being aware of laws and regulations can prevent unnecessary trouble and keep young people out of difficult situations.

Alternative words/phrases: Legal trouble, run-in with the police, minor offense

At an Impasse – A situation where progress is impossible

The student council at Dhaka University was **at an impasse** over funding a new library. Some wanted a digital archive, while others insisted on physical books. They argued for weeks, unable to reach a consensus. Similarly, many youth-run initiatives in Bangladesh face such deadlocks, especially in decision-making. Instead of staying stuck, finding common ground is key. When people fail to communicate effectively, being **at an impasse** becomes inevitable, leading to delays in important projects and lost opportunities.

Alternative words/phrases: Deadlock, stalemate, standstill

At Large – Free and not caught (often used for criminals) or present in a general sense

The notorious scammer who defrauded students with fake scholarship offers is still **at large**. Many young people in Bangladesh fall prey to online fraudsters promising guaranteed visa processing or job placements abroad. It's crucial to stay vigilant and verify before trusting unknown sources. Awareness campaigns have been launched to educate students about such scams. Social media has played a significant role in exposing fraudsters **at large**, helping victims seek justice and warn others before they fall into similar traps.

Alternative words/phrases: On the loose, unrestrained, unapprehended

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At the Drop of a Hat – Immediately, without hesitation

When Bangladesh wins a crucial cricket match, people take to the streets **at the drop of a hat**, waving flags and celebrating. This impulsive enthusiasm is also seen in university students when organizing protests or celebrations. While passion is great, strategic planning is equally important. Acting **at the drop of a hat** without thinking can lead to setbacks. Many young professionals in Bangladesh are realizing the importance of balancing spontaneity with well-thought-out decisions to ensure long-term success in their careers.

Alternative words/phrases: Instantly, without delay, on the spot

Black Sheep – An outcast or a person who is different from the rest of the group

In many Bangladeshi families, choosing an unconventional career makes someone the **black sheep**. If a student wants to become a musician instead of an engineer, they may face criticism. Yet, being a **black sheep** isn't always bad; some of the greatest innovators were outliers. Society takes time to accept change, but perseverance matters most. Many successful entrepreneurs in Bangladesh were once considered **black sheep** for rejecting traditional jobs, but they eventually proved their choices were valuable.

Alternative words/phrases: Outcast, misfit, odd one out

Cash Cow – A profitable business or venture that generates steady income

The garment industry is Bangladesh's **cash cow**, bringing in billions through exports. Without it, the economy would struggle significantly. Just like businesses seek a **cash cow** for stability, individuals should look for skills that secure long-term earnings. Many students turn freelancing into their personal **cash cow**, sustaining their studies with it. Investing in digital skills like programming or graphic design can help young Bangladeshis build their own **cash cow**, ensuring financial stability while pursuing other ambitions.

Alternative words/phrases: Revenue generator, money-maker, goldmine

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Covered a Lot of Territory – Explored or discussed many aspects of a subject or traveled extensively

In a single debate session, the students **covered a lot of territory**, from climate change to education policies. Bangladeshi youth are highly active in discussions about politics, startups, and global affairs. Whether it's at a café in Dhaka or in an online webinar, they love diving deep into complex topics. Similarly, preparing for competitive exams means one has to **cover a lot of territory**, from mathematics to business strategy, ensuring they are well-prepared for the challenges ahead.

Alternative words/phrases: Explored various topics, touched on many areas, expanded widely

Crying Over Spilt Milk – Complaining about something that cannot be changed

After failing his first university admission test, Arafat kept **crying over spilt milk**, regretting his mistakes instead of preparing for another chance. This is common among Bangladeshi students who feel defeated after a setback. However, what matters is learning and moving forward. Instead of wasting time **crying over spilt milk**, focusing on the next step brings success. Even Magnus Sam, after initial struggles, didn't dwell on failures—he channeled his energy into getting into IBA for his MBA.

Alternative words/phrases: Dwelling on the past, regretting the inevitable, mourning over something irreversible

Cut to the Chase – Get to the main point without unnecessary details

During university debates, students often discuss irrelevant topics before reaching the actual issue. A good moderator knows when to **cut to the chase** and bring the discussion back on track. In Bangladesh, many startup meetings drag on with endless brainstorming instead of focusing on execution. Effective communication requires knowing when to **cut to the chase** to save time and resources. Leaders who master this skill ensure quicker decision-making, a crucial trait in both academic and professional settings.

Alternative words/phrases: Get to the point, be direct, skip the fluff

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Eager Beaver – Someone who is very enthusiastic and hardworking

Rafiq, a young programmer in Dhaka, is an **eager beaver** when it comes to coding. He stays up late, perfecting his skills and learning new programming languages. His enthusiasm helps him stand out in job interviews and freelance platforms. Many students in Bangladesh's tech industry are **eager beavers**, constantly honing their abilities. Whether it's university studies or entrepreneurship, being an **eager beaver** ensures success, as dedication and effort always pay off in the long run.

Alternative words/phrases: Hard worker, highly motivated, go-getter

Give a Penny for Her Thoughts – Ask someone what they are thinking

During a group study session at Dhaka University, Jahan seemed lost in thought. Curious, her friend turned to her and said, "**Give a penny for your thoughts!**" She smiled and shared an innovative solution to a difficult math problem. This phrase is often used when someone appears deep in thought, and their ideas could be valuable. In many classrooms and offices in Bangladesh, a simple "**Give a penny for your thoughts**" can encourage quiet individuals to share insightful perspectives.

Alternative words/phrases: Tell me what's on your mind, share your thoughts, what are you thinking?

Give Him a Wide Berth – To avoid someone or something

After Rashid started spreading false rumors in his university, most students **gave him a wide berth**. No one wanted to associate with someone so toxic. In workplaces too, employees often **give a wide berth** to colleagues who are known for creating unnecessary drama. In public transport or crowded markets in Dhaka, people tend to **give a wide berth** to anyone who seems suspicious. Avoiding negativity or trouble is a smart way to stay focused on one's goals.

Alternative words/phrases: Stay away from, avoid, keep a distance

Gone to the Dogs – Deteriorated or declined in quality

Many once-thriving heritage sites in Bangladesh have **gone to the dogs** due to poor maintenance. Broken roads, pollution, and negligence have ruined places that were once rich in history. Similarly, some youth-focused initiatives start with great energy but eventually **go to the dogs** because of a lack of proper leadership. Without effort and investment, anything—whether a business, a city, or a personal goal—can **go to the dogs**, proving that sustainability is just as important as initial success.

Alternative words/phrases: Fallen apart, declined, worsened

Got His Day in the Sun – Finally received recognition after hard work

For years, Aamir worked as an independent filmmaker, struggling to gain recognition. When his short film won an international award, he **got his day in the sun**. Many talented individuals in Bangladesh face similar struggles, be it in music, business, or academics. However, perseverance always leads to success. When someone finally **gets their day in the sun**, all their efforts feel worth it. True dedication, despite obstacles, eventually brings the moment where hard work pays off.

Alternative words/phrases: Achieved recognition, finally succeeded, received well-deserved credit

Hard and Fast – Fixed, strict, or non-negotiable

The admission requirements at top universities in Bangladesh are **hard and fast**—students must meet a certain GPA, pass entrance exams, and clear interviews. Similarly, some companies have **hard and fast** deadlines for projects. However, life doesn't always follow **hard and fast** rules; adaptability is essential. While certain principles must remain firm, success often requires balancing rigidity with flexibility, especially in rapidly changing fields like business and technology.

Alternative words/phrases: Strict, set in stone, non-negotiable

In Full Swing – At its peak or most active stage

During Eid shopping season, New Market in Dhaka is **in full swing**, packed with customers bargaining for the best deals. Festivals, political campaigns, and cricket matches in Bangladesh often reach a point where excitement is **in full swing**. Similarly, when university admission season begins, coaching centers are **in full swing**, with students working day and night to secure a place in top institutions. Passion and energy fuel any movement when it is **in full swing**.

Alternative words/phrases: At its peak, fully active, in full motion

In the Brink of Success – Extremely close to achieving a goal

Tania spent months preparing for the Bangladesh Civil Service exam and now finds herself **on the brink of success** after passing the preliminary rounds. Many startups in Bangladesh, despite early struggles, remain **on the brink of success** with the right business model and persistence. However, this is the most crucial moment—one misstep can turn potential success into failure. Smart decision-making ensures that those **on the brink of success** cross the final hurdle and achieve their dreams.

Alternative words/phrases: On the verge of winning, close to achieving, nearly successful

Jump on the Bandwagon – To follow a popular trend or movement

During election season in Bangladesh, many politicians **jump on the bandwagon**, suddenly supporting trending causes to gain votes. The same happens in social media, where people **jump on the bandwagon** of viral challenges without knowing their origins. While trends can be exciting, blindly following without understanding can be risky. Whether in fashion, politics, or business, thinking critically before deciding to **jump on the bandwagon** is always wise, as not every trend leads to meaningful results.

Alternative words/phrases: Follow the crowd, go with the flow, hop on the trend

Just Deserts in the End – Getting what one deserves (often in a negative sense)

After years of corruption, the dishonest businessman got his **just deserts in the end**, facing legal action and losing everything. In Bangladesh, people often see individuals rise through unfair means, but in time, karma catches up. Hardworking students who dedicate themselves to studies also receive their **just deserts in the end**, securing bright futures. Whether good or bad, life ensures that actions bring appropriate consequences, reinforcing the belief that justice, though delayed, eventually prevails.

Alternative words/phrases: Reaping what one sows, getting what one deserves, facing the consequences

Keep Them at Bay – To prevent someone or something from affecting or harming you

During monsoon season, people in Dhaka struggle to **keep mosquitoes at bay**, using sprays, nets, and coils. Similarly, students facing distractions before exams must **keep them at bay** to focus on studies. Whether it's negativity, bad habits, or financial problems, learning how to **keep them at bay** is essential for success. Controlling one's environment, staying disciplined, and making strategic choices help individuals stay on the right track and avoid unnecessary obstacles in life.

Alternative words/phrases: Hold off, prevent, keep away

Labor of Love – Work done for passion rather than financial gain

Writing poetry, painting murals, or volunteering for social causes—these are true examples of a **labor of love**. Many Bangladeshi youth dedicate time to projects that may not bring immediate profit but create long-term impact. Whether it's building an education startup or organizing free workshops, the spirit of a **labor of love** drives real change. While financial success is important, pursuing a passion for its intrinsic value brings a deeper sense of fulfillment.

Alternative words/phrases: Passion project, heartfelt work, work of love

Laid All My Cards on the Table – To be completely honest and open about one's intentions

During a business deal, the entrepreneur **laid all his cards on the table**, revealing his full strategy to potential investors. In relationships, honesty is key—when people **lay all their cards on the table**, misunderstandings decrease. Transparency in workplaces and friendships leads to better trust and cooperation. Whether discussing finances, career plans, or personal struggles, those who **lay all their cards on the table** are more likely to build meaningful connections and avoid conflicts.

Alternative words/phrases: Be honest, open up, reveal everything

Left-Handed Compliment – A compliment that also contains an insult

"You look good for someone who doesn't usually dress well"—this is a classic **left-handed compliment**. Many people unknowingly give **left-handed compliments**, thinking they are praising someone while actually being rude. In workplaces, saying, "You did surprisingly well in this project!" can also feel like a **left-handed compliment**. In Bangladesh, social gatherings often involve relatives giving such comments about appearance, careers, or even cooking. Learning how to differentiate between genuine praise and subtle insults is important.

Alternative words/phrases: Backhanded compliment, disguised insult, sarcastic praise

Made a Clean Breast of It – To confess or admit something openly

After months of hiding his academic struggles, Arif finally **made a clean breast of it** and asked for help. Many students in Bangladesh hesitate to speak about their challenges, fearing judgment. However, making mistakes is part of growth, and those who **make a clean breast of it** find better support and solutions. Whether in personal relationships or professional settings, being honest about failures allows individuals to learn and improve rather than suffer in silence.

Alternative words/phrases: Come clean, confess, admit openly

Making Hay While the Sun Shines – Taking advantage of opportunities while they last

During Durga Puja or Eid, small business owners in Bangladesh **make hay while the sun shines**, earning peak profits from festive sales. Similarly, students who get scholarship opportunities should grab them without hesitation. Success often depends on recognizing the right moment and acting quickly. Whether it's a booming industry, a career opening, or even a networking event, those who **make hay while the sun shines** maximize their chances of long-term gains.

Alternative words/phrases: Seize the moment, take advantage, capitalize on opportunities

Nail-Biter – A tense or suspenseful situation

The Bangladesh-India cricket final was a true **nail-biter**, keeping fans on the edge of their seats until the last ball. University admission results also create **nail-biting** moments for students anxiously waiting for their names on the list. In politics, close election results turn into **nail-biters**, as no one knows who will win until the last moment. These high-pressure situations may cause stress, but they also make victories sweeter and more memorable.

Alternative words/phrases: Edge-of-the-seat moment, suspenseful event, thrilling situation

Now and Then – Occasionally or from time to time

Even the most disciplined students in Bangladesh enjoy a break **now and then**, stepping away from their books to watch a cricket match or go for a walk. Hard work is essential, but refreshing the mind **now and then** improves productivity. Whether it's catching up with old friends or revisiting childhood memories, everyone enjoys moments of nostalgia **now and then**. Balancing responsibilities with relaxation is key to maintaining motivation and avoiding burnout.

Alternative words/phrases: From time to time, once in a while, occasionally

Off-the-Cuff – Spontaneous or unplanned

During a university debate, Fahim delivered an **off-the-cuff** speech that impressed the judges. In Bangladesh, political leaders and media personalities often make **off-the-cuff** remarks that spark controversy. While some thrive under pressure, others struggle without preparation. An **off-the-cuff** response can show confidence, but it can also lead to mistakes if not carefully considered. Being able to think quickly is a valuable skill, but knowing when to prepare is equally important.

Alternative words/phrases: Unplanned, spontaneous, improvised

Pull the Plug – To end something, often suddenly

The government **pulled the plug** on an illegal coaching center that charged students high fees for fake promises. Many startups in Bangladesh fail when investors **pull the plug** due to financial instability. Even in relationships, people sometimes have to **pull the plug** when things aren't working. While it's tough to quit something, knowing when to move on can save time, effort, and resources. Making the right exit decision is just as important as starting strong.

Alternative words/phrases: Shut down, terminate, cancel

Playing Second Fiddle – Being less important than someone else

In many Bangladeshi families, younger siblings often feel like they are **playing second fiddle** to their elder brothers or sisters. The same happens in workplaces, where hardworking employees feel overlooked while their superiors take the credit. Even in student groups, some leaders take the spotlight while others are left **playing second fiddle**. However, every role is essential, and with patience and hard work, those who **play second fiddle** today can become leaders tomorrow.

Alternative words/phrases: Being overshadowed, taking a backseat, being second-best

Rank and File – Ordinary members of an organization, not the leaders

During protests in Dhaka, the **rank and file** of student movements often drive the real change, while leaders get most of the media attention. In every organization, the **rank and file**—the everyday workers—keep things running smoothly. Without the **rank and file**, companies, political parties, and even universities would collapse. While leadership is important, recognizing the contributions of the **rank and file** ensures fairness and motivation in any system.

Alternative words/phrases: General members, ordinary workers, grassroots members

Run into Rough Weather – Face difficulties or challenges

Many startups in Bangladesh **run into rough weather** due to financial struggles or lack of proper planning. Even students preparing for competitive exams often **run into rough weather** when balancing studies and personal life. Challenges are part of life, and knowing how to navigate them makes all the difference. Instead of giving up, those who persist through tough times can emerge stronger and more experienced, turning adversity into opportunity.

Alternative words/phrases: Face challenges, hit a rough patch, go through tough times

Saw the Light – Finally understood or realized something important

After struggling with his studies, Arif **saw the light** when he changed his study habits and started scoring higher. Many young entrepreneurs in Bangladesh **see the light** after their first failed venture, realizing what mistakes to avoid. Realization often comes through experience rather than advice. The moment someone **sees the light**, they gain clarity and purpose, making better decisions for their future. Learning from failures is the key to long-term success.

Alternative words/phrases: Realized the truth, had an awakening, understood

See Eye to Eye – To agree with someone

Despite their political differences, the two candidates **saw eye to eye** on the need for better education in Bangladesh. Many business partners struggle initially but succeed when they **see eye to eye** on key decisions. In families, generations often disagree, but mutual respect allows them to **see eye to eye** on important matters. Finding common ground is crucial in personal and professional relationships, ensuring smoother communication and progress.

Alternative words/phrases: Agree with, be on the same page, have mutual understanding

Steals Others' Thunder – Takes credit for someone else's achievement

During a group project, Rafiq did all the research, but his classmate **stole his thunder** by presenting it as his own work. In many workplaces, supervisors **steal their employees' thunder**, taking credit for ideas without acknowledgment. This often happens in creative fields, where someone's hard work is overshadowed by a more outspoken colleague. While unfair, those who keep proving their worth eventually gain recognition despite others trying to **steal their thunder**.

Alternative words/phrases: Take credit unfairly, overshadow, hijack recognition

Take After – Resemble or inherit qualities from someone

Many young cricketers in Bangladesh **take after** Shakib Al Hasan, hoping to match his all-rounder skills. In families, children often **take after** their parents in terms of habits and personality. Some inherit their father's business sense, while others **take after** their mother's artistic skills. Whether it's career, interests, or values, the way people **take after** their role models shapes their paths in life. Learning from past generations helps individuals carve their unique journey.

Alternative words/phrases: Resemble, follow in footsteps, inherit traits

Took an Early Bath – Left or finished something earlier than expected (often due to failure)

During an intense football match, the star player **took an early bath** after getting a red card. In exams, students who fail to complete their papers on time might as well have **taken an early bath**. Similarly, businesses that fail in the first year feel like they have **taken an early bath** before fully reaching their potential. However, setbacks are part of the journey, and those who learn from early exits come back stronger.

Alternative words/phrases: Left early, failed prematurely, exited before completion

Turned Your Back on Me – Betrayed or abandoned someone in a time of need

After years of friendship, when Rafi needed help the most, his closest friend **turned his back on him**. In Bangladesh, many small businesses feel politicians **turn their back on them** once election promises are over. Betrayal hurts the most when it comes from someone trusted. Whether in politics, business, or personal life, realizing that someone has **turned their back on you** teaches valuable lessons about trust and self-reliance.

Alternative words/phrases: Betrayed, abandoned, left in the dark

Wake-Up Call – A shocking event that makes someone realize the truth

Failing his first university entrance exam was a **wake-up call** for Ashik, pushing him to study harder for the next attempt. For Bangladesh, the frequent floods and cyclones should serve as a **wake-up call** for better disaster preparedness. Often, people ignore small warnings until a major setback forces them to change. Whether in personal growth, health, or national issues, a **wake-up call** can be painful but necessary for real improvement.

Alternative words/phrases: Reality check, eye-opener, harsh reminder

Wade Through – To struggle through something difficult

During the monsoon season, Dhaka residents literally **wade through** flooded streets. But beyond the physical struggle, students **wade through** mountains of books during exam season. Many Bangladeshi entrepreneurs also **wade through** financial difficulties in the early days of their businesses. While these struggles seem overwhelming, persistence helps people emerge stronger. Whether it's academic pressure, economic hardship, or career uncertainty, learning to **wade through** tough situations builds resilience.

Alternative words/phrases: Push through, struggle with, work through

Walking All Over Me – Taking advantage of someone's kindness

Mitu always helped her colleagues, but soon they were **walking all over her**, making her do extra work without appreciation. Many people in Bangladesh feel the same when relatives expect financial support without contributing anything in return. In workplaces, employees sometimes let bosses **walk all over them** by accepting unfair demands. Setting boundaries is crucial; otherwise, people will continue **walking all over you** without remorse.

Alternative words/phrases: Exploiting, taking advantage, mistreating

Weal and Woe – Both the good and bad times of life

A true friend stays by your side through **weal and woe**, not just during moments of success. In Bangladesh, families often support each other through **weal and woe**, whether celebrating achievements or enduring financial hardships. No one's journey is free from struggles, but facing **weal and woe** with determination leads to personal growth. Whether in friendships, careers, or national progress, standing strong through both joys and challenges defines true character.

Alternative words/phrases: Ups and downs, joys and sorrows, highs and lows

Went Off at a Tangent – Got distracted from the main topic

During a group discussion on climate change, one student **went off at a tangent**, talking about cricket instead. This often happens in classrooms, where students ask unrelated questions and steer discussions in a different direction. Even in political debates in Bangladesh, speakers frequently **go off at a tangent**, avoiding direct answers. Staying focused is essential for productive conversations, as **going off at a tangent** can waste time and lead to confusion.

Alternative words/phrases: Got sidetracked, drifted away, lost focus

Wind of It – Learned about something (usually secretly or unexpectedly)

The university tried to keep the exam question leak a secret, but students **got wind of it** before the test. In Bangladesh, news of political scandals spreads quickly because the media always **gets wind of it**. Whether it's a new business deal, a celebrity scandal, or a secret event, once people **get wind of it**, word travels fast. In the digital age, keeping secrets is harder than ever.

Alternative words/phrases: Found out, discovered, overheard

With the Skin of His Teeth – Barely succeeding or escaping failure

Zahid passed his accounting exam **with the skin of his teeth**, scoring just one mark above the failing grade. Many Bangladeshi startups survive **with the skin of their teeth**, struggling through financial difficulties before finding success. Sometimes, last-minute efforts help students or professionals **get by with the skin of their teeth**, but relying on luck isn't a sustainable strategy. Hard work is always the best way to ensure success rather than cutting it close.

Alternative words/phrases: Just barely, by a small margin, narrowly escaped

Zero Tolerance – Complete and strict refusal to allow something

The government has declared **zero tolerance** for drug abuse, enforcing strict laws and punishments. Schools in Bangladesh are adopting **zero tolerance** policies against bullying, ensuring student safety. Having **zero tolerance** for corruption, discrimination, or injustice is crucial for a fair society. When people stand firm against wrongdoings, they create environments where ethics and fairness prevail, making real progress possible.

Alternative words/phrases: No compromise, strict rule, firm stance

