

Study Buddy: Empowering differently abled children

SHARMIN JOYA

Study Buddy is an organisation that supports differently abled children and those with learning disabilities and difficulties. Sheikh Inzamam, founder and CEO of the organisation, studied Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) at Ahsanullah University of Science & Technology (AUST), Department Of CSE.

Study Buddy provides services and products to help children who face problems with learning from an initial stage. "Children with learning disabilities are often marginalised by the society," says Inzamam, who grew up with a sister with special needs. "Parents of these children face many difficulties to maintain their lives smoothly, because the society is not supportive. In 2017, my sister passed away at the age of twenty-four due to infections in the respiratory system. I dedicate all the efforts of Study Buddy to her." He started the organisation after his sister's departure.

Study Buddy participated in the start-up incubation programme, Zeitgeist, organised by German Embassy, Grameenphone and Better Stories. It was held on May 2018, where they won the competition. They have been selected for the Youth Co: Lab Accelerator Bangladesh 2.0 programme organised by UNDP Bangladesh in December 2019 as well.

The organisation also beat more than 430 applications and made it to the top 15 of the final stage of the incubation programme, Toru. They also made it as one of the leading companies in Under iDea project (4th batch), ICT Division, in 2019.

According to Inzamam, dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia are common disorders faced by three out of ten children. Such kids face difficulties during basic



Sheikh Inzamam

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA



A device by Study Buddy through which differently abled children can learn four different motor skills. PHOTO: COURTESY

learning and reading, which leads to them dropping out of their education before high school, and even entails risks of unemployment and loss of jobs later in life.

To help prevent these disorders in children from an early stage, Study Buddy developed an application that creates augmented reality, motivating the students to read and learn. They have created another interesting device, through which differently abled children can practice and learn four different motor skills. The organisation plans

to increase the number of activities in the future.

Other than working for children with special needs, Study Buddy also provides support for their families and careers, with professional services personalised for each individual. They aim to empower parents and educators of children with special needs all over the country. "We want to create a community for kids with learning disabilities, so that they can enjoy academic, social and emotional skills required to

succeed in life," asserts Inzamam.

Presently, Study Buddy is actively working with ten special schools and supporting more than 200 working parents of differently abled children with the help of their volunteer partner, the social organisation, Rotaract District 3281.

The Study Buddy app can be downloaded from <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.inzamam.engn.slidingtab&fbclid=IwAR2BdVcxmmu6VwKyW3M3jJE0ZhXjEk4-qW67tjprxAUmDEv56ur-18gxR20>.



Study Buddy developed an application that creates augmented reality, motivating students to read and learn. PHOTO: COURTESY



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YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES

Diversity and Inclusion Youth Conference 2020 in Malaysia

The DIYC Conference 2020 is a three-day youth conference inspired by the Model United Nations proceedings (MUN procedure) which form a key milestone and a biennial event of the movement. Covering issues such as world politics, international relations, and justice, participants will be given the opportunity to test their leadership skills, debate current issues, deliver speeches, draft resolutions, make executive decisions, and realize through experience the complexities of managing diversity in an international relations setting.

DEADLINE: March 05, 2020 | Conference

12th International Inter University Short Film Festival 2020 in Dhaka

Dhaka University Film Society (DUFS) in association with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), presents the 12th edition of the International Inter-University Short Film Festival 2020. It is a festival that aspires to promote and inspire the work of young university going filmmakers with the slogan 'Take Your Camera, Frame Your Dream'.

DEADLINE: April 24, 2020 | Competition

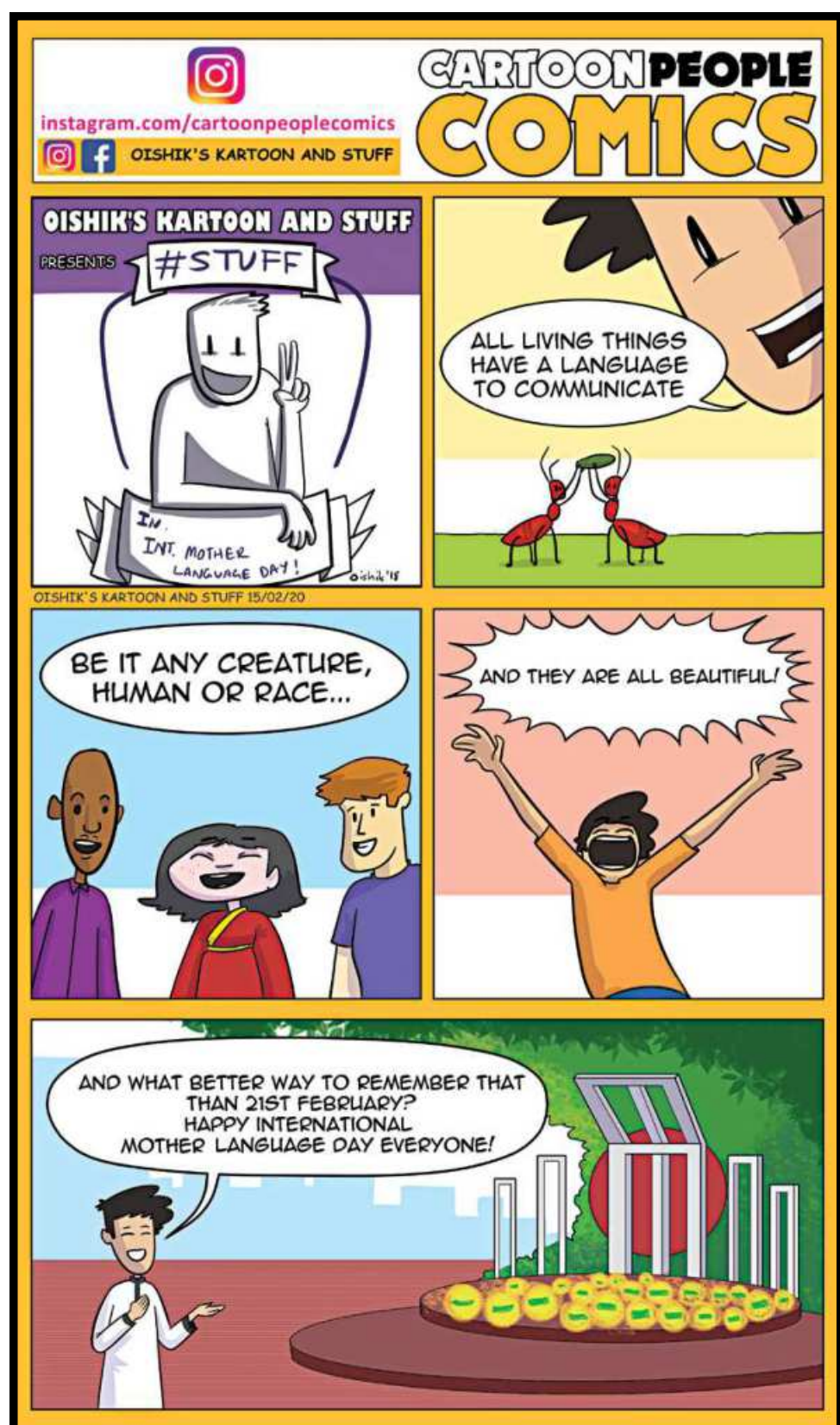
Nominations Open for The MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity 2020 in Tokyo

The MIDORI Prize is a biennial international prize co-organized by the AEON Environmental Foundation and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) that honors three individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. It aims to encourage positive action for biodiversity and inspire others by showcasing the notable work of those it honors.

DEADLINE: March 30, 2020 | Awards



The MIDORI Prize for Biodiversity 2020



The Unexpected Friend: A story dedicated to Rohingya children

TIASHA IDRAK

Throughout decades, over a million Rohingyas have fled the violence in the Rakhine state of Myanmar. The persecution of the Rohingya people led to the exodus that began in August 2017, marking one of the most tragic humanitarian crisis in recent history. The biggest victims of this catastrophe were women and children, who witnessed the targeted violence and are limited to the identity of refugees today.

With the belief that marginalised communities have every right to be heard, writer Raya Rahman and illustrator Inshra Sakhawat Russell worked together on the book, *The Unexpected Friend*, which tells the story of Rohingya children. The book was published on December 10, 2019, in both English and Bangla, by Guba Publishing, in partnership with Save the Children.

The plot of *The Unexpected Friend* revolves around Faisal, a resident of the refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, who finds an injured bird. The medical clinics of the camp are crowded by patients who are in urgent need of help. Amidst the long queues of refugee patients, no one notices the injured bird. Subsequently, Faisal decides to care for the bird with his sisters. The children, thrilled to have a pet, face a dilemma once the bird's wings start to heal. While the book focuses on the children, it subtly mentions the issues of exodus, life in the refugee camp, the daily struggles of the refugees and the deforestation which resulted from the crisis. Dedicated to the Rohingya children, the illustrated story is based on a report by Linda Steinbock and Eline Severijnen, titled *Childhood Interrupted: Children's voices from the Rohingya Refugee Crisis* (2017). The illustrator Inshra said that Steinbock and Severijnen turned to Guba Publishing to work on a book that could educate Bangladeshi



Raya Rahman and Inshra Sakhawat Russell

PHOTO: COURTESY

kids and the international community about the hardships of the Rohingya children.

Childhood friends Raya and Inshra co-founded Guba Publishing, with a view to introduce children's books that reflect Bengali culture, in both English and Bangla. It took them six months to develop *The Unexpected Friend*. Inshra visited the camps in Cox's Bazar to learn about the experiences of the refugees directly. "The book features unique colour codes for each of the characters - all of which are intentional and are left for the observant eyes," said the illustrator.

According to the author, the little red bird, the titular 'unexpected friend', symbolises childhood innocence. The author and the illustrator further spoke about the challenges they faced while depicting a sensitive issue

like the Rohingya refugee crisis. "The initial drafts contained backstories about the violent situation in Myanmar, but child protection advisors from Save the Children asked us to remove that bit, as they wanted the story to be a form of escape for kids. Any kind of political rhetoric is also absent from the book. Ultimately, the story focuses on the feeling of community amongst the residents of the camp," said Raya. "It is about how hope can emerge even from the most unexpected places."

The book, written for children between the ages of three and ten, can be purchased from Bengal Boi, Pathak Shamabesh, Aarong, Fantasiom, Bibi Productions, Batighor and Bookworm Bangladesh at BDT 440. It is also available at the Ekushey Boi Mela 2020 at stall 3, Guba Publishing's official stall.