

The young and the bold

Youth-led start-ups supported by UNDP join the fight against Covid-19

A CORRESPONDENT

Covid-19 has brought the world to a screeching halt in roughly four months. Its crippling effect has touched on every aspect of people's lives. Bangladesh and UNDP have been actively working with the government on mitigating the impacts of Covid-19.

Sustainable youth-led startups and social enterprises developed through Youth Co:Lab, a common platform for young entrepreneurs co-founded by UNDP and Citi Foundation have been working in Bangladesh since 2018. They have repurposed their operations to help Bangladesh fight the crisis.

We take a look at some of these Youth Co:Lab supported initiatives.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Moner Bondhu

The social enterprise propped up by the Youth Co:Lab platform, Moner Bondhu is a platform to provide care for mental health and well-being service with a dynamic and skilled team of counsellors and experts from Bangladesh.

Moner Bondhu is currently providing free 24/7 tele-counselling and video-counselling to help people handle the mental stress caused by Covid-19. Anyone can seek free counselling by calling the hotline number +8801776632344 or by contacting their Facebook page.

BD Assistant

BD Assistant is active in Rangpur district (North

Bengal) as a Peer to Peer (P2P) service marketplace for daily maintenance services such as appliance repair, renovations, handyman services etc. for households and offices. But when they saw that in Covid-19 crisis people need more support such as delivery of daily groceries and medicine, the enterprise started assisting people quarantined at home with a new service line delivering farm fresh groceries collected from farmers, as well as medicine right to their doorsteps.

PeaceMaker Studio

PeaceMaker Studio has been working to create awareness and spread information before the Covid-19 crisis. During the crisis it has now repurposed its mission to also battling misinformation, which according to the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres is "infodemic." They have produced and published visual content on preventing fake news and awareness building, safety measure from Covid-19 promoted through individual interviews and proper hand washing techniques. To date, their content has reached more than 60,000 people.

iFarmer

iFarmer is an impact tech start-up that has developed an innovative online platform for any Bangladeshi to easily invest in farming and livestock.

The initiative has also started a Business to Business (B2B) vegetable supply to the e-commerce platforms based in Dhaka, Bangladesh's capital, so that the farmer families can sell their produce at a fair price.

"It took iFarmer.asia five days to design a supply chain mechanism to procure vegetables from the farmers," said Fahad Ifaz, CEO of iFarmer.

"We worked for only a couple of days for PriyoShop.com to adopt fresh veggies and groceries into their platform for customers and a LinkedIn message and couple of calls for Truck Lagbe to get on board, who gave amazingly quick and cost-efficient support to bring farm produce from the north of the country to Dhaka," he added.

Shuttle

Shuttle, another start-up supported by UNDP Youth Co:Lab, provides safe, comfortable and affordable transportation for women in Dhaka.

Following the crisis, they have expanded their operations to provide safe and secure transport support to people who provide essential services and need to attend office during the lockdown situation in Dhaka and Chattogram. All the vehicles are especially sanitized for the passengers, carry sanitization kits and first aid as necessary.

These are just the tip of the iceberg of innovative ways to fight Covid-19. UNDP Bangladesh hopes that this inspired a wave of fresh ideas which will set the trend for the rest of the region.



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Falling in your dreams

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It is midnight. The silence settles in, its presence periodically interrupted as the clock ticks by. You try to sleep and switch sides. Thoughts, as uninvited as some relatives, come to seek your attention. Finally, after minutes or even hours of battle, your sleep triumphs over your subconscious thoughts. You dive deep into your sleep only to wake up again, startled, perhaps even breaking a sweat.

This feeling of falling in a dream is quite familiar to most of us. Chances are, more of your dreams have been broken this way than due to nightmares.

So, what is it?

Such a dream brings forth an involuntary twitch in your arm and leg muscles, and sometimes in the entire body causing you to wake up. This is called a "hypnic jerk". If you have watched the movie Inception, the "kick" they refer to as the key from exiting their dream state is none other than a hypnic or hypnagogic jerk.

What do the scientists say?

Researchers have found that approximately 70 percent of people have experienced hypnic jerks at least once in their lives. As a person drifts asleep, certain parts of the brain reduce its activities as they hand over to others. During this handover, the previous part detects a decrease in brain activity. It then carries out a last-ditch effort to regain control and rarely becomes successful in doing so. This surge in brain activity due to a rough or failed transition during sleep causes the twitching of muscles causing a person to wake up.

Another such hypothesis explains itself using the theory of evolution. Brains of earlier primate-like human forms had this reflex mechanism to protect them against falls as they often rested on trees. Additionally, hypnic jerks may also have been useful in making them more alert against potential predators.

I experience these jerks. Should I be worried?

According to most experts, these sudden movements are nothing to worry about. Factors such as stress, lack of sleep, increased caffeine consumption usually contributes to these jerks. Don't restrain yourself from having your daily cup of cappuccino if these hypnic jerks are not as bad for you.

References

1. MedicalNewsToday. *What is a hypnic jerk?*
2. Wikipedia. *Hypnic jerk*.

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