PRIDE

Rubaba Dowla is Chief Service Officer, head of m-Commerce and PR of Airtel Bangladesh, the 4th largest telecom operator in the world. She was instrumental in building Telenor subsidiary Grameephone as the number one brand and market leader in Bangladesh. She has won numerous national and international accolades among them Ananya top 10 women in Bangladesh in 2007 and Top 5 most powerful women in mobile in Asia, Charged magazine, Hong Kong. Rubaba Dowla shares with the Star how to create a positive image of Bangladesh.



Rubaba Dowla PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

The most important asset Bangladesh has is its resilient and happy people. The world knows little about us. Despite a negative image, created due to some recent events—political turmoil, high inflation, RMG sector mishaps, we have much to be proud of. Bangladesh has been recognized as the export power house, the 2nd largest RMG exporter and 7th largest outsourcing industry in the world. We have the 8th largest industrious and valued labour force. Our GDP is stable and forecasted to grow at 10 percent level by 2021, we aim to become a middle income level country by 2021 and be the 30th largest economy of the world by 2030. We are embracing technology at a much faster rate than many countries in the world. We draw strength from our values, cultural identity, ethnic and religious diversity.

We need to tell the world *these* stories.

In today's globalised market, every country, region and city competes for a share of the world's consumers, tourists, exports, and investors. Today's community of nations is open, transparent and substantially democratic—in many ways, like a marketplace. Thus we need to create, change and promote a distinct self-image and reputation that serves our nation's interests. Identifying factors that differentiate us from the competition is the key. We need to position ourselves uniquely both in terms of destination branding and country branding. This will attract investors, increase export of local brands and improve the quality of life of our people.

We must utilise the collective strength of the Bangladeshi diaspora (NRB) across the world who are well positioned to be our ambassadors. Branding is about creating trust and delivering what has been promised. Trust builds confidence among a nation's own citizens and trading partners. We often confuse nation branding with mere advertising campaigns focused towards attracting tourists. Nation branding is more than that. It is our national identity interpreted, internalised and projected onto the international arena. It envelops not only the companies within the country, but also its people, culture, values and identity.

Private and public sectors have to work in sync. Good governance and pragmatic leadership will steer this branding process. We must deliver as per promise. Just as companies have learned to "live the brand," we as a nation have to consider our reputation carefully. We must be proud to be a Bangladeshi. We must not simply tell a happy story; we must tell a unique, compelling and accurate one, tailored to suit our development goals. ■

people, processes and techniques that produce the highest-quality clothes in the world?

It can and should be. For example, NewsCred was born in Bangladesh and we are now the leading content marketing platform in the world. We have proven the thesis that Bangladesh can offer more to the world than just cheap labour. We have shown that we can build original Bangladeshi brands that re-imagine and re-invent entire global industries, make the world a better place and thereby change the meaning of "Made in Bangladesh".

Third, we need to give young entrepreneurs the coaching, support and toolset to succeed by establishing a vibrant startup community in Bangladesh. The local startup ecosystem is growing at an exponential pace with communities such a Startup Dhaka, StartupBashBD, StartupGrind, Startup Weekend leading the way to a better tomorrow.

The future of entrepreneurship in Bangladesh couldn't be more exciting.