

| STAR PEOPLE |

When all his colleagues used to enjoy lazy weekends after five days of rigorous work, Nuruddin Ahmed, a young computer engineer never took a break. He had to redouble his energy to work for his brainchild shorob.com that has become a platform of young thinkers, writers and activists. Through shorob.com he has been chasing his dream to develop a society of open minds where positive thinking, aspiring activism and pluralistic approach to all thoughts and ideas are ensured. With a huge collection of online educative materials, e-books with several publications, offline community activities and a network of young thinkers, writers and entrepreneurs, Nuruddin has already gone across a significant milestone to reach his vision.

the chance to young thinkers and activists to raise their voice against injustices and human rights violation. Its Bengali e-books on difficult topics of mathematics and science have made them easier and accessible for hundreds and thousands of young learners.

As a form of recognition, Nuruddin's shorob.com won the prestigious Social Media for Empowerment Award in 2014, conferred by Digital Empowerment Foundation. Nuruddin shares his experience, "All that I had done for shorob.com and the contributions of shorob's writers, developers and contributors are voluntary. We work only for our vision and nothing else. So, when we receive this kind of recognition it really inspires us a lot."

Nuruddin, with his innovative ideas, made shorob.com much more than a

AN ACTIVIST'S TALE

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN



PHOTO: COURTESY

Nuruddin Ahmed the founder of award winning blog shorob.com says, "When I took the initiative in 2011, I never thought that it would be like a mediocre blog site full of political debates, scandals and plagiarised articles. Rather I had tried to develop a platform where youngsters of our country will share positive initiatives, original ideas and information in Bengali for developing our inner self."

Thanks to Nuruddin's efforts shorob.com has become a platform for creative youngsters. Its rich and innovative educational materials lure learners who want to learn computer programming, photography, infographics, and different skills which are not taught in our traditional schools and colleges. Its open platform for discussion and exchanging views gives

blog. Through this website, he has published the first Bengali e-book on mathematics in 2012. Thanks to Nuruddin's mentoring, many ideas of community activism published in shorob.com such as campaign to rehabilitate Rana Plaza victims, projects on recycling have come into fruition. Shorob.com has been organising monthly discussion sessions called 'shorob shor' for aspiring young writers on a wide range of topics.

After passing B.Sc. in Computer Science and Engineering from BUET Nuruddin is now pursuing his Masters in Public Policy at Central European University. Regarding his future plan, Nuruddin says, "I want to create a strong community of writers, thinkers and activists who will be able to guide our nation in the future." ■

ADVOCATING FOR THE VOICELESS

NAZIBA BASHER

Lawyer Nadia Chowdhury has always wanted to do something for stray animals in Bangladesh; and making use of the Cruelty to Animals Act 1920 was her chance to contribute.

She was lucky enough to come from a family with a handful of brilliant lawyers. "Family gatherings always meant having scintillating discussions about politics and the country's current affairs which left me predisposed from an early age," she says.

Nadia has lived and studied between Bangladesh and the UK. "I completed my MSc from the London School of Economics, did my LLM from the City Law School, got called to the English Bar from Lincoln's Inn, did my LLB from the London South Bank University and aside some years of schooling in the UK, I was schooled mostly at Bangladesh International School," says Nadia. She now practices in Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh's chamber, before which she was with Rokanuddin Mahmud for two months.

Since returning to Bangladesh in May 2014, she has had the opportunity to work for animal welfare alongside Founder of Obhoyaronno Animal Welfare Society, Rubaiya Ahmad. "At the age of 6, when I saw a cruel-looking man stab a dog with iron rods, it scarred me for life. I remember hoping I could do something to stop people like him

from killing dogs in the future," says Nadia. "Of course at that time I didn't really know to what extent dog-culling was prevalent in Bangladesh, and it's really sad to see that even after 20 years such barbaric practices still exist."

The main provision that specifically relates to dog-culling is section 7 of the Cruelty to Animals Act, 1920 which distinctively prohibits the killing of any animal in an unnecessarily cruel manner unless prescribed by religion or for science, and makes it punishable by a maximum of 6 months jail and TK 200 fine. "We also used public nuisance amongst other arguments for the purpose of the writ petition," she says.

There are a lot of things to fight for with regards to animal rights in Bangladesh, like in respect to zoos, circus animals, horse-carts, turtles, roadside pet shops, etc., "but I have no intention of limiting myself to any one area of law and would like to fight for as many causes as I can," she says.

Being an animal rights activist, Nadia advocates for and promotes the causes of Obhoyaronno as much as she can, "I think the best way to fight for animal rights is by demonstrating to people, who do not feel an affinity to animals, how precious all animals really are and helping them come out the mind-set

that makes them look at animals as feeling less, dangerous creatures riddled with diseases and as creatures at their disposal."



PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO