

"I think Islam is the means of establishing justice and equality. God cannot be God if God is unjust," says Zainah Anwar, prominent Malaysian human rights activist and one of the most influential Muslim feminists.

Zainah established a global movement called Musawah (Equality in Arabic) in February 2009. The establishment has become a pluralistic and inclusive platform of NGOs, scholars, activists and legal practitioners, ensuring justice and equality in Muslim families. She is also one of the founding members of Sisters in Islam which has successfully created a space for debate and discussion regarding women's rights and empowerment within the framework of Islam.

Born in Johor Bahru, Malaysia in an urban Muslim family, Zainah has always been a rebel and used to question the traditional practices. However, she realised that these practices, mostly discriminatory to women, have nothing to do with Islam; rather these are purely social and imposed by the patriarchal community.

"Husbands beat their wives, they marry twice or thrice to appease their insatiable sexual appetite, they don't give sustenance to their wives and they think these are their divine rights," she says. "I was outraged by these discriminations and oppressions against women that are done in the name of God, in the name of Islam."

WAGING PEACE AND JUSTICE

THE STORY OF ONE OF THE STRONGEST ADVOCATES OF MUSLIM WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE WORLD.

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO



Zainah Anwar

Soon after, she began to study the holy Quran. She also studied the explanations of the holy Quran (tafseer), interpretation by different scholars belonging to different schools of thought; and also the Quranic laws and principles (fiqh). According to her, Islam can actually be a means of women empowerment. "The Quran can be the tool to solve all the societal problems," she says. But to do so, she adds, a correct, practical and progressive interpretation of the Islamic laws is necessary.

"The world has changed profoundly in the 21st century than it was in the 7th or 12th century. Today, a woman can be the only earning member of a family; there are millions of single-mother families in the world. "These issues need to be addressed and articulated in the interpretation of Islamic laws," adds Zainah.

Recently Zainah visited Bangladesh to talk about 'Gender Justice and Religion' at the Speakers' Forum Series, arranged by BRAC University's Social Science and Economics Department in collaboration with Georgetown University's Berkeley Centre for Religion, Peace and World Affairs. Thanks to Zainah's courageous initiatives, Muslim women around the world now have the platform to speak, learn and struggle for their rights in the society.

STAR PEOPLE

QUIRKY SCIENCE

Detecting cocaine in someone is just a finger tap away.

Research conducted by the University of Surrey, a team of researchers from the Netherlands Forensic Institute (NL), the National Physical Laboratory (UK), King's College London (UK) and Sheffield Hallam University (UK) reveals a new, non-invasive method that is able to identify whether cocaine has been ingested through a simple fingerprint. Using an analytical chemistry technique known as mass spectrometry, the team analysed the

FINGERPRINT TO DETERMINE DRUG USAGE

fingerprints of patients attending drug treatment services. Contrary to the previous fingerprint tests which could only be able to show whether a person had touched cocaine, this test can actually confirm the drug intake.

When the cocaine gets metabolized in the users, they emit traces of benzoylecgonine and methylecgonine which are the chemical indicators present in fingerprint residue, informs Dr Melanie Bailey from the University of Surrey.

As a part of their investigations,

they followed a technique known as Desorption Electrospray Ionisation, or DESI where they sprayed a beam of solvent onto the fingerprint slide to find out if whether these substances were present or not. While traditional drug testing methods have some limitations including biological hazards and privacy concerns, researchers are considering this method a safer test for drug users that could be deployed for law enforcement agencies within the next decade.

SOURCE: SCIENCEDAILY.COM



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ADVERTISING EXCEPTIONALITY

NAZIBA BASHER

Award winning Ad Filmmaker and Managing Director of RED dot Multimedia Ltd, Gazi Ahmed Shubhro has had a life full of surprises. Today he stands as one of the most popular directors in the country, when it comes to ad films.

Shubhro studied at BAF Shaheen, Dhaka and Notre Dame College, prior to moving to Arkansas to study Business Administration in University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. "I came back to Bangladesh before completing my degree, and started a restaurant, after which I joined a buying office," says Shubhro.

"While I was working there, I joined a band called K-OZ. I met with the band Miles who were looking for someone to direct their music video for the Indian television channel Taara," says Shubhro. Somehow, they felt Shubhro could do the job well and approached him, and even though hesitant at first, he made the music video. "Soon after that I joined another band called Sahara where I met Paul Kirkham, the then Managing Director of BAT, who quit his job to pursue his love for music in the UK. He influenced me greatly and told me to do something that I love," he says, "that is when I seriously thought of direction as a career."

Shubhro was soon was approached by popular singer James to make five music videos. During the same time, ATN channel contacted him to direct a musical show called Rock and Rhythm. After gaining much popularity from the show, James then upped his offer to Shubhro to start the company RED dot. "After establishing RED dot, I got into this profession full time," says Shubhro. "I learned all the technicalities while doing the job,

PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

and the more I learned, the more I was fascinated by it."

He was called from some of the biggest corporate agencies to directed ad films and shows. Shubhro has created over 400 TVCs so far. "But one that I was possibly happiest with was the audio-visual 'Beautiful Bangladesh' for the ICC 2011 World Cup," says Shubhro.

Apart from this, Shubhro has also made ad films for the Bangladesh Navy and the Bangladesh Air Force. He has worked with Lux Channel 1 Superstar for 3 seasons, and Close-up 1 for a music video of the top-10 contestants.

As Shubhro continues to charm his audience through fantastic audio-visuals, he has high hopes for future ad filmmakers. "We have great facilities now; we have YouTube and Google, where people can learn things easily," he says, "but the one thing everyone should remember is to recognise their own creativity. YouTube and Google can only teach all the technicalities, but everyone has their own creativity and it is entirely up to them to express it in their own unique way."

Gazi Ahmed Shubhro

HIGH SALT INTAKE DELAYS PUBERTY



A study presented at the European Congress of Endocrinology in Dublin shows that high salt intake may delay puberty.

A group of researchers from University of Wyoming, USA led by Ms Dori Pitynski are looking into the relationship between various levels of salt in rats' diet and the onset of their puberty. The study discovered that rats fed diet rich in salt (equivalent to 3 or 4 times the recommended daily allowance for humans) demonstrated delay in reaching puberty compared to the group that fed a normal (low) salt diet. After conducting this research, Ms Pitynski and colleagues have reached the consensus that salt intake is essential for the onset of puberty, however that extreme intake can affect reproductive health that might cause behavioural problems, stress and reduced fertility.

"Our work shows that high levels of fat and salt have opposite effects reproductive health" informed Ms Pitynski. "High fat diet is thought to accelerate the onset of puberty but our work demonstrates that rats fed a high salt diet even with a high fat diet will still show a delay in puberty onset."

"Current salt-loading in Western populations has the potential to drastically affect reproductive health, and warrants further attention" said Ms Pitynski.

SOURCE: SCIENCEDAILY.COM