

Icarus Takes Flight

ZARIF "MANCITY" MASUD



Icarus is a group that started out in January, 2013 and has been working to provide a platform for young talents in art, animation, concept etc. It aims to encourage aspiring artists to improve and reach professional levels.

SHOUT spoke to the founders of Icarus – Zubab Panni and Nafisa Shamim, as they talked about the group, its vision, activities and the upcoming event Beacons 2. Zubab and Nafisa both hold jobs and run Icarus as a side-project. But that does not stop them from dreaming big. It was a joy to hear them talk about their goals and plans for Icarus.

So, what is the vision behind Icarus?

There are many talented young artists in our country but they don't have a solid platform. We are looking to create youth empowerment by creating the right platform from which they can take their work to the next level.

We are all excited about Beacons 2, but first, tell us about Beacons 1 a little.

Beacons 1 was held at the Zainul Abedin Gallery last year. It was a joint programme by Icarus and Adity School of art. Fifty percent of the art were from the art school and the rest were from Icarus. We featured various original works and fan art. There was an unplugged music session on the last day of the event.

Tell us about your other programmes.

We have had various promotional activities. We approached a number of schools and colleges and we talked about Icarus and tried to inspire amateur artists to be creative and to take their work to the professional level. We are looking to arrange various programmes but for that we need to find the right people. In the future, we plan on including universities in our activities as well.

After Beacons, our next big event was Project Sollertia. It was a daylong workshop last year where we covered various topics related to art and digital art. Featured instructors included a semi-professional mangaka and a professional animator with her own studio in Bangladesh. The workshop was held at Bishwo Shahitto Kendro.

We also held two music programmes. We have a music team which covers anime soundtracks.

Coming back to Beacons 2.0. What will you be doing differently?

Firstly, it's going to be a lot bigger. This time, there will be no fan art or music

session. We will focus on the exhibit featuring only original manga, comic books, graphic novels, and digital illustrations.

We are now going to unveil our secret attractions. [*Smiles*] We plan on having a corner dedicated to Naruto as a tribute, since the manga ended last year. There will also be a corner for Navid Rahman where he would be doing Bangladesh's first light and shadow art. Lastly, we will be having graffiti and 3D art at the event.

We want to inspire people to start drawing, to not be disheartened if you aren't good enough yet. You can take it professionally if you try hard. We have various people from media and other parties who might be looking to give artists commissioned work based on the exhibition.

From these events, we will also be looking to pick artists for the magazine that we plan on starting. It will showcase various manga, comic book and other creative works. We are still researching to determine how often we can publish such a magazine in Bangladesh.

Lastly, I think our readers might be interested in knowing how to get involved with you guys or to send submissions.

We are working on developing our own website, but for now, you can reach us through our Facebook group or page. <https://www.facebook.com/Icarus.bd.page>

KolpoKoushol: A Knowledge Initiative

ISHRAT JAHAN

The World Bank's Knowledge Economic Index ranks innovation in Bangladesh at 191 and shows a long and winding road ahead for innovation and technology here.

Kolpokoushol is a platform to bring together young minds of Bangladesh and the students and alumni of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to inspire, develop and organise new ideas. The initiative aims to encourage participants to acquire a variety of skills, and employ those towards solving community specific problems.

A PhD student at MIT Media Lab and founder of KolpoKoushol, Nazmus Saquib explains what the workshop plans to achieve: "KolpoKoushol roughly translates to 'imagination engineering'. I think that students here are too grade-oriented. Research and innovation skills are completely different from the skills that can get you a straight-A. Imagination, creative thinking and diverse skills are more important for innovation. KolpoKoushol aims to foster a multidisciplinary research and innovation philosophy. Our engineers, entrepreneurs and policy-makers should know how to approach a problem from different perspectives and work in a multidisciplinary team."

The team at KolpoKoushol includes of Bangladeshi alumni and current students

of MIT. Ehsan Hoque (Assistant Professor of Computer Science, Rochester University, MIT Media Lab PhD '13), Shammi S. Quddus (MIT '10), and Sujoy Kumar Chowdhury (Product Manager, Microsoft, MIT Media Lab alumnus) will be Advisors. Tamanna Islam Urmi (MIT '16) and Sumaiya Nazeen (PhD student, MIT EECS) will be the Programme Managers.

Founder of Toru (the facilitating organisation behind KolpoKoushol), Saif Kamal, explains why this initiative is necessary: "At the base of innovation and social enterprises are network and knowledge – that is what Bangladesh is missing. We require multiple networks of international and local organisations and institutes who can develop the youth's capacity to transform ideas into enterprises. Ultimately, we are trying to build alumni of innovators and help them grow so that they go on to become the agents of social change."

The desired outcome of the initiative is to deploy decentralised and autonomous R&D labs network that provide technology-based solution to community problems. These community-based, local R&D labs will be connected to the workshop alumni and mentors, enabling further technical and logistical help.

KolpoKoushol will inaugurate with a 6-day workshop (July 23 - July 28, 2015) for



students in the undergraduate level in Bangladesh, and promises this to be the first of a series of workshops that they intend to organise in the future.

The topics will include rapid idea generation techniques, product design and development, rapid hardware prototyping, advanced topics in artificial intelligence, and augmented reality.

The workshop requires their participants to be creative and is open to stu-

dents, young professionals and those who have a strong background and interest in engineering and sciences. If you have ever felt like a misfit in the traditional academic system: this one is for you.

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