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# NEXT STEP

## WHAT REAL ESTATE HAS TO OFFER

Sadat Hossain Salim is a prominent figure in the country's real estate arena. A successful professional in the field, Sadat Salim is now working as an advisor of Rupayan Group. Initially a student of English Literature, Sadat Salim went to grad school in the UK to study Industrial Management. Even now, he enjoys reading and picking up new skills. Next Step recently caught up with him for an interview.

### What's your take on the present scenario of the real estate market in Bangladesh?

In the last 30 years, the real estate sector in our country has seen massive growth because of the shortage of homes for the increasing population and the apathy of the government in solving the crisis. Private developers have brought about a massive change in the city's skyline, albeit in an unplanned way to some extent. This happened because of the mass migration towards Dhaka as people flocked to the capital in pursuit of better livelihood, education, healthcare and living condition. With time, the radius of Dhaka city has grown, and it is now touching the nearby districts. However, the real estate business has taken a dip even though the demand is still high.

The boom that we saw till 2012 has stopped suddenly. This could have happened because of the irresponsibility of some real estate companies as there are complaints against such companies of exploiting customers. However, the situation is improving with time.

### What's the contribution of this sector to the economy in terms of generating career scopes?

Directly and indirectly this sector has created immense job opportunities for the young generation. Once we used to import 80 percent of our ceramic tiles, but now because of the real estate sector, there are around 10 local ceramic companies. Machine-made bricks weren't there in the past, but now there are factories that make environmentally friendly bricks. Technicians and labourers have plenty of job opportunities. This business has created countless skilled construction workers who are now working abroad and sending remittance to Bangladesh. We have trained people and made a significant contribution in building a skilled workforce.



**"Not only for business graduates, the real estate sector has created equal opportunities for civil engineers, architects, interior designers and technicians. Anybody can think of a career in this sector."**

### What can different educational backgrounds find in this sector?

There was a time when aspiring marketing graduates would look to build a career in FMCGs and MNCs, but over the last three decades the real estate sector has created a competitive job platform for them. Now we see many real estate experts; they have clear ideas of all local and international happenings in this sector. Not only for business graduates, the real estate sector has created equal opportunities for civil engineers, architects, interior designers and technicians. This sector needs a lot of customer relationship managers alongside engineers and business graduates. Anybody can think of a career in this sector.

Now many private universities offer

degrees on engineering, construction and related subjects, and these students get employment in real estate. This is tremendous contribution to the country's economy.

This business will continue to grow, and many more backward linkage industries will flourish in the future. We are still importing pipes, fittings, and electrical fittings from China. But we can make these in our own country which will create more employment opportunities.

### Where do you see this sector in the next 10 years?

More than 60 percent of the population in Dhaka live in rented houses; they are potential buyers. So this business will keep growing. I personally think that the government should have greater involve-

ment here to foster planned development. The government should build the required infrastructure and implement it in partnership with private developers. Public Private Partnership is very much needed in the housing sector.

Mass people need housing, and we are here to serve them. But when we buy private land at high rates and build houses in partnership with land owners, the prices go up. This is the main reason behind the price hike of apartments. The government can take cheap land and hold a bidding amongst private developers which will bring fair competition to this sector. If the government becomes our major stakeholder, we will be able to offer accommodation for the mass people at an affordable rate.

### What does it take to be a successful professional in the real estate business?

To be a successful professional in the field, one has to be hardworking as there's no shortcut success. When you're dealing with the people's hopes and dreams, you have to be committed and loyal so that potential buyers can trust you. People trust business professionals with commitment.

### What role Rupayan is playing to make Dhaka better?

We are taking Dhaka out of Dhaka by building communities outside the capital. We want to be a pioneer in this regard. We are focussing more on connecting suburbs with the main towns to mobilise a part of the population outside Dhaka. I think we all have responsibilities to make our city a more liveable place. In this effort, everyone should be a stakeholder.

For the full interview, check out the Next Step web page.

INTERVIEWED BY: SAURAV DEY

## IMPACTING THE FUTURE: BANGLADESHI ENTREPRENEURS AT THE PROFESSIONAL FELLOWS CONGRESS

Bearing the slogan 'Impacting the future: It starts with us', a Professional Fellows Congress was held at Washington, DC between May 31 and June 2. From 43 countries, 263 emerging global leaders of the Professional Fellows Exchange Programmes of Spring 2016 gathered at the congress hosted by the United States Department of State, concluding an intensive month-long fellowship placement with state and local government offices, NGOs, media outlets, and businesses in 29 states across the United States.

The four entrepreneurs attending from Bangladesh include Ratul Dev, Founder of Gen Lab; Md Rasheduzzaman, Director of Mondal Agro Ltd., Mohiuddin Chowdhury, Co-Founder of Dreamcast Marketing & Communications; and me, Syed Rabi



Shams, Co-Founder and PR Strategist of Newsfeed PR. Our month long fellowship, which was partnered by the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Oklahoma, commenced from May 2 to May 28.

It was an awe-inspiring, once-in-a-lifetime experience to recharge and move forward in our careers as entrepreneurs. The three-day long Professional Fellows Congress provided professional experience and training that nurtured the participants' latent talent and prepare them for more responsible leadership positions in their businesses, communities and society in general as the fellows return to their countries and start their venture with new enthusiasm.

SYED RABIUS SHAMS

## THE LEFT SIDE CLASSROOM DONATE FOR CHANGE



Kazi Fori Government Primary School, Mirpur. Numerous under-privileged children go there to receive education every other day or week, if not everyday, hoping to learn something new regardless of the situation back home or the lack of proper resources available in the school itself. For families who cannot afford three meals a day, stationery and books are mere luxuries. Some students continue, others drop out.

### But that was last year.

Today, the school has a small library which is home to around 500 books, a computer and stationery available for all the children studying there. The number of children dropping out due to the lack of resources has decreased and they are more motivated to want to study. The reason behind this incredible transformation is The Left-Side Classroom, an initiative by Sadia Afrin Binte Azad and Sujan Daring.

Sadia (EEE graduate from BRAC University) and Sujan (IR graduate from Jahangirnagar University) are both Teach for Bangladesh Fellows, who are currently teachers of the aforementioned primary school as part of their fellowship. After a few months of teaching, they observed the problems these children suffer through due to the lack of utensils. They also recognised the children's enthusiasm in reading storybooks, which they lacked as well. To help

her students out, Sadia made a post with a few photos of her students on the popular Facebook group DSD (Desperately Seeking Dhaka), asking for donations of storybooks and stationery items. Her post had attracted a lot of attention, which led to a massive influx of donations, some even offering money. **That was August 2015.**

Today, The Left-Side Classroom has its own Facebook page through which they manage the donations. This project has also been ranked at the top three of the Telenor Youth Forum 2015. When asked about the reason behind the name, Sadia answered, "Actually our classroom is on the very left side of our school, but another reason is the idea of being 'left aside' when speaking of the opportunities and the children themselves." Their projects are not only centralised on providing stationery items, but they have carried out health camps and counselling sessions on social issues (such as drug addiction) as well. Project Scarlet was one such accomplishment under the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) where The Left-Side Classroom was their school partner. These health camps consisted of medical issue discussions, check-ups of students as well as parents, and distribution of sanitary napkins to the girls. Motivational speakers are also brought in to inspire and motivate

the children, which helps fuel their ambition.

From the March of 2016, after receiving numerous requests, The Left-Side Classroom has started to focus on other schools. Their projects vary based on the schools and their needs, since some only want stationery whereas others want a library. Since its initiation, it has come a long way now and they have received help and support from many individuals as well as organisations. Their team of two has increased to five now and they are currently working on a website, which they hope to launch by the end of Ramadan.

When asked about future plans, Sadia and Sujan opened up about the charity organisation, The Giving Tree Foundation. The Left-Side Classroom will be a project under the organisation, along with many other projects they hope to come up with, especially targeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They are currently open to support from organisations and partnerships with schools.

For donations/support, please contact their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/leftsideclassroom/>

SABRINA RAHMAN

The writer is a sophomore at the Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka.

## Making a DIFFERENCE

Bangladesh is rapidly moving towards middle income status by 2021. Our businesses definitely offer immense opportunities for the growing economy and this diversity needs a stage for the stories untold. See Bangladesh make its mark on the global map as Making a Difference brings you our proudest success stories from across the country.

### 4 TRENDS CHANGING HOW WE WORK

15 years ago, email hadn't even started to take over phone calls and meetings as the main form of workplace communication in Bangladesh. What will be the major shifts paving the way we work in the next decade?



#### LINES BETWEEN HOME AND OFFICE BLUR

Collaboration apps, internal social networks and remote teams are making the traditional office a thing of the past.

Offices will get increasingly more homey and informal, with couches and open work areas.

#### WORK MANAGEMENT BECOMES LESS AD HOC

Companies will experiment more and take calculated risks instead of refining standard products and procedures.

Companies will keep it small with a core group of key employees and hire freelancers.

Large companies will embrace flat management styles to give workers greater freedom and say.



#### CROSS-FUNCTIONALITY DOMINATES

Employee turnover will be on the rise, as workers stay with a company 2-3 years and move on.

To adapt to this, workers will master several skills and switch between them. People will start picking up "nano-skills", and "nano-degrees".

#### CULTURE IS DEFINING SUCCESS

Organisations will rely less on annual performance reviews, emphasising on coaching, skills development, and self-initiative.

This also means greater personalised perks in parental leave, learning opportunities, etc.



INFOGRAPHIC BY: AMIYA HALDER