

AN AMBASSADOR OF THE YOUTH

OSAMA BIN NOOR

ELITA KARIM

Recently, Osama Bin Noor made headlines in Bangladesh, when he went to receive an award in Buckingham Palace, in the wearing traditional garbs – kurta, lungi and a gamcha. Not only did he carry the deshi attire in style, but also managed to impress the world with his ideas and work.

Osama won the 2016 Queen's Young Leaders Award – an award which is granted to young people (between the ages of 18-29) in the Common Wealth countries, working in the fields of development, human rights, environment etc. Osama was honoured with the prestigious award for his website – youthop.com – which aims to bring together global opportunities for the young in Bangladesh. "But now, many living abroad use the platform as well," says Osama, who has been running the website since 2012, with his team – co founder Makshud Manik, and members Muntaka Khan and Kazi Sumaita Nahar. "Because of the website, a lot of young people living in Bangladesh and abroad now have access to these opportunities, grants, internships and fellowship programmes, which otherwise many were not aware of."

His team at youthop.com consists of young men and women who work closely together. "Women are very dedicated towards their work," he says. "I had always felt that. I am glad we have a good team!"

Osama feels that life is a little better and easier, now that he has other benefits which came along with the Queens Award. He, along with the other winners, is now doing a distance learning course on Leading Change at Cambridge University. "This is one of the benefits that we get along with the award," says Osama. "The course helps us work on self-development, story telling and much more." While in the United Kingdom, the winners had also visited Cambridge University to attend a two-day workshop. "Every winner has a coach assigned to him or her," he says. "The coach would carry discussions with us regarding life, what we need to do, how to write a life story, how to speak to the public, how to approach the media and much more. The coach would guide us the way he or she would guide a player with a graph history and other resources. Even now we are in touch with our respective coaches. After a couple of weeks, a mentor has been assigned to each of us. We are now going to be under mentorship

for the next 6 months. We will also get a certificate each at the end of the course."

In addition, the winners also had sessions with a top agency in the UK, Media Trust, who conducted workshops on social media, youth empowerment, spreading positive work, how to brand, how to tell a story etc. "We later went to a community radio station, where discussions were held on how to create awareness on different subjects making an impact in society. The BBC Academy held master classes on storytelling. In fact, my story was made an example, where we were further taught to relate and speak to the public. At the Twitter office, we were



given classes on how to create and spread positivity on social media."

Osama Bin Noor, currently a third year student of Dental Surgery at Update Dental College, hails from the Madrasa stream of education in Bangladesh. He completed his Dakhil (SSC) from Tanjimul Ummah Cadet Madrasa and Aalim (HSC) from Tamirul Millat Kamil Madrasa. "I was in the science stream," he says. "We studied everything— starting from math, physics, chemistry, civics, social studies – all the subjects required in the general curriculum. Subjects such as the quran, hadith, fiqh and language were added to the curriculum. In fact, we studied three languages – English, Bangla and Arabic – speaking, writing and reading!"

Like most Madrasa students, Osama was isolated at one time, refusing to mix with people outside his comfort zone. "Many young people my age felt differently about madrasah students," he says. "I was particularly afraid to mix with the English medium students. But after I joined Jaago Foundation for their UCED



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| STAR PEOPLE |

Osama Bin Noor

probably bullied, sexually harassed and having problems with friends, relationships and also parents. These young people tend to isolate themselves from the world, because nobody seems to understand them or their problems. That's when certain segments of the society take advantage of their loneliness, their isolation and fill in the gaps with hate speech, with negative encouragement and finally lure them to committing crime. That's when these youngsters start thinking about destruction. They need someone to talk to them, to share their ideas, to uplift and encourage their ideas to come out in the open for acknowledgment and appreciation."

According to Osama, young people need to be motivated. Officials and professionals need to go and speak to young people and motivate them, inspire them, and guide them. "There are so many opportunities in the country," he says. "But because of certain complexities involved in the process, not many have access. For instance, the ICT ministry had begun a cprogramming and coding contest. But not many knew about it. Only one or two groups of people would end up participating in all these contests!"

It is often said that Bangladesh, today, does not have, heroes and leaders, the young can look up to. Yes, we do have our youth organisations, the winning sportsmen, the courageous mountain climbers, and of course the liberation war heroes from 1971 and beyond. However, the young minds are hungry for may more idealistic heroes who they can follow and showcase as examples. After all, becoming global citizens is not an easy task!

| ENQUIRY |

For a long while after the 7/1 attacks in Holey Artisan Bakery, in Gulshan, Dhaka, the police and law enforcement agencies have told us that they have Tahmid Hasib Khan, 22, and Hasnat Karim, 47, held as suspects. These two individuals have been held by the police and detectives for almost two weeks, without being allowed to meet their families or speak to lawyers. Their relatives and family members could never find out how they are doing.

Now, we do not even know where they are.

Tahmid, a student and resident of Canada, studying Global Health, was on his way to Nepal for an internship with UNICEF. Upon his mother's request, he visited Bangladesh to celebrate Eid with the family. He landed in Dhaka on the 1st of July, the day the siege took place, and went to Holey Artisan Bakery to meet his friends. On that very unfortunate evening, Tahmid became a hostage in one of the worst crime scenes Bangladesh has ever witnessed.

After the attack took place, the law enforcement agencies had done a good job so far in the crackdown against the militants. 22 lives were lost in the gruesome attack, but 13 were rescued. Among the 13 was Tahmid Hasib Khan, who was taken in for questioning, like all the other surviving hostages. While the other hostages were let go after questioning, Tahmid and Hasnat were asked to stay back.

A patient of epilepsy, Tahmid, had been in the custody of the law enforcing agencies since the morning of 2nd July, after the hostages were released and rescued.

According to reports, Tahmid's brother Talha Khan said the family was very concerned and the worry was taking its toll. He said his father has been hospitalised with chest pains in Dhaka, while his mother has been suffering from an emotional breakdown.

Meanwhile, a New York Times report dated July 8 quoted two hostages as saying the attackers had ordered Tahmid Hasib Khan to perform specific tasks for them.

In the report, it was stated that "at one point, the attackers directed Tahmid Hasib Khan to carry a gun and go with

IT IS ABOUT TIME

NAZIBA BASHER



Tahmid Hasib Khan

PHOTO: COURTESY

them to the roof of the restaurant, the hostages said. They said Tahmid Hasib Khan resisted and to persuade him to hold the weapon the attackers fired it to show him its magazine was empty. Tahmid Hasib Khan broke down in tears at their insistence, one of the hostages said, but reluctantly complied."

The NY Times report also said that

Tahmid persuaded the attackers to spare the group, and soon after, at about 6am, they were released," the report said quoting two hostages who were released afterwards.

The law enforcing agencies have informed the public that Tahmid and Hasnat were both held as suspects and/or witnesses. "If any law enforcing agency

holds someone as a suspect, it is mandatory for them to produce a case in front of the court within 24 hours. If this is not done, it is directly violating our constitution," says Khandakar Farzana Rahman, Lecturer, Department of Criminology, University of Dhaka. "In case of national security, there are exceptions in procedures. For example, the suspects may not be allowed to meet anyone before going to court. But the next of kin and/or family members are to be informed before release. And the rule of presenting the case in court within 24 hours still applies, and if the suspects are to be kept in remand, the court takes the decision – not the law enforcement agencies. Every citizen in our country, according to our constitution, has the right to fair justice. And if injustice is given to them while in custody, they have every right to provide evidence in court in case of harassment," she says.

Now, after almost two weeks, on July 12, 2016, what we have learned from the DMP directly is that, "we released them after questioning," according to a Daily Star report, quoting Masudur Rahman, deputy commissioner (media) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP)

On the same day, July 12, 2016, Tahmid's cousin Ali Faiyaz Shoumo said, "We were able to speak to him twice. Once when he was held hostage, and once right after he was rescued. We are expecting that they will release him soon," he says. "They have kept him inside as an eye witness and a suspect. As far as we know, he was interrogated by all agencies- CID, SB, NSI, and DB. We cannot contact the DB directly. Right now we are waiting for his release," he added.

While the law enforcement agencies have done a lot so far, this is where we have come and stumbled. We have to now appeal for this nightmare to end. Tahmid's family and friends' concerns and anxiety are growing, and everyone is in need of answers.

If the police in fact have let Tahmid go, why have they done it without contacting the next of kin? And if the two have in fact gone missing after the release, why are they not concerned that two key witnesses have gone missing after the biggest terror attack in the country? ■

ABOUT TOWN



BHARATANATYAM BY THE KOLPOTURU ENSEMBLE

July 16, 6:30 pm, Chhayanaut, Dhanmondi
Hosted by: Lubna Marium
For more information, visit- <https://www.facebook.com/events/1347667568581019/>



DHAKA POP CULTURE EXPO 2016

July 15, 3 - 9 pm
Baridhara DOHS, Convention Centre
Hosted by: DHAKA POP EXPO
For Query and Tickets, visit- <https://www.facebook.com/events/1078993845489270/>



ACTIVITY B: SCHOLARSHIP & UNIVERSITY SEARCH PROCESS

July 16, 3.30 - 4.30 pm
EMK Center, Midas Center Building, Dhanmondi
Hosted by: EMK Center
For more information, visit- <https://www.facebook.com/events/1058614070881458/>