

"READ MORE SCI-FI STORIES"

– Raihan Sikder Razon

Judge, Digital Innovation Challenge for Women 2017



PRIYANKA CHOWDHURY

The Digital Innovation Challenge for Women 2017 is already in its second week. Last week, the first round of elimination took place. Those who moved forward in the race are now fastening their seat belts for a tougher competition. The judges are facing equal pressure if not more to choose the best among these bright, enthusiastic participants. How does a judge think? Raihan Sikder Razon, CEO of Activation - We automate, gives Star Youth some insight.

Raihan has been associated with Women in Digital since its inception. Recalling memories of association, Raihan says, "We were alarmed by the low number of female participants in the Hackathon, which generated the idea of creating a platform just for women." They were also skeptical about the success of the initiative. Instead, they received an overwhelming amount of response in the first year. "If we can continue this over a period of 5 to 10 years, these young women will be more confident," he adds.

Raihan has been giving e-governance solutions that are deployed in Switzerland and Germany. He is closely working with the Health Ministry of Bangladesh as well.

Raihan says that he is particularly interested in competitions because it gives him an opportunity to meet young and fresh minds who can contribute to the industry. A good idea does not necessarily mean it has to win a competition, but, a competition is a way to evaluate the idea and themselves. "The winner will be a team that is balanced in every aspect but it does not necessarily mean other ideas are not great," says Raihan. He also says that evaluating is necessary for an idea to turn into a product. An idea is always great to the one who creates, but, may not be market ready.

Talking about the contestants, Raihan comments that most of them are driven by IT ideas that they see around them. "I want them to think beyond their university projects or Bangladesh," adds Raihan. As an example, he says that many are interested in creating an e-commerce solution, but, get stuck when it comes to payment system. "Instead, they could create a payment gateway for the system," says Raihan.

As Star Youth ends the interview with Raihan, he raises his hand and exclaims, "Oh, I'd like to add something! The participants should read Sci-Fi stories even more as it will open them to different ideas."

PHOTO: SUSNATA CHAKMA

It's Okay to Share Your INNER STRUGGLES

SHABABA IQBAL

Unfortunately, stigmatised attitudes towards people with mental health problems are still widespread and noticeable. It's Okay Bangladesh, a platform that provides mental support to distressed individuals, aims to eradicate such attitudes by creating an empathetic online community that would build a bridge between mental health experts and humans struggling with mental health problems.

Four young minds, Abdullah Hasan Safir, Wakila Hussain Mousmi, Kamela Chowdhury Suparna, and Mohammad Abdul Majid, developed this idea in the Digital Khichuri Challenge 2016. It was

a contest where different participants competed to develop innovative online campaigns to promote tolerance, peace, and diversity in Bangladesh.

It's Okay Bangladesh's website, launched in May 2017, allows visitors to sign up anonymously, share their own stories, and provide comfort to one another. Visitors can also find contact information of experts and counselors, relatable, encouraging stories of survivors of mental health illnesses, and informative mental-health related Bangla articles.

Recently, suicide, radicalisation, and drug addiction amongst students have harrowingly been on the rise. This suggests that neither families nor other

social institutions provide adequate support to the youth. "Students need to see why they should not take such extreme steps and instead, be encouraged to share their inner struggles," says Mousmi, who is an internationally experienced counselor herself. "Families need to encourage children to identify their own unique qualities and deal with failures fearlessly," Mousmi further says. The website's "Write to Mousmi" feature allows visitors to share their experiences and seek guidance and information from a counselor and her team.

On July 23, 2017, the day of HSC result publication, the founders arranged an event through which they provided phone numbers of experi-



enced volunteers who were available to help out students in need of mental support. They received hundreds of phone calls during the event, and a remarkable response on social media. The event's main Facebook post was shared more than 3,80,000 times. It's Okay Bangladesh further hopes to connect with a bigger audience, develop broadcasts, and partner with many other counselors and psychologists to provide mental health services and sustainable solutions to cope with mental health issues.

If you would like to pay a visit to It's Okay Bangladesh's website, here is the address: <http://itsokaybd.com>

PHOTO: SUSNATA CHAKMA



yo www.youthop.com Youth Opportunities

1. Global Education Parliament 2017 in Dhaka



Global Education Parliament 2017 is a global event. They are going to invite some of the foreign guests and participants who are working with the youths and it is a voluntary platform. They think it would be better to have some partners like different departments of the Government, United Nations Agencies, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), Corporate Houses, Experts and the Philanthropists.

Deadline: October 12, 2017 | Conference

2. SIS Design Challenge 2017 at BINUS University, Indonesia

SIS Design Challenge 2017 facilitates students (undergraduate programme) from various design and technology backgrounds (e.g. HCI, UX, ICT, industrial design, product design, visual design, interaction design) to demonstrate their problem-solving and design ability to propose solutions for socio-cultural issues. This year's competition theme is 'Social Interaction Changed through Digital Era'.

Deadline: October 8, 2017 | Competition

3. The 2018 Ashoka U Exchange



The 2018 Ashoka U Exchange, co-hosted by Babson College, is one of the largest international gatherings for college and university professionals to learn and share leading practices for embedding social innovation in higher education. Participants come together to share how they equip aspiring changemakers – through their classrooms, co-curricular programmes, departments, institutions, communities and beyond – to catalyse long-term, meaningful change, and social impact.

Deadline: October 2, 2017 | Fellowship

4. King Hamad Youth Empowerment Award 2017

This initiative aims to empower young people and give them the attention, encouragement, and motivation needed. It will encourage all eligible participants to improve the enabling environment and infrastructure for youths to allow them to be effective and productive citizens contributing to their communities.

Deadline: October 10, 2017 | Award

5. IUT 9th ICT FEST 2017 in Dhaka



The much-awaited signature event of "IUT Computer Society" is back. Islamic University of Technology's Computer Society's (IUTCS) young enthusiasts will be organising information and communication technology (ICT) festival entitled "IUT 9th ICT Fest 2017" that will be held on October 13th and 14th, 2017, at Islamic University of Technology (IUT) campus in Gazipur.

Deadline: Ongoing | Competition

PHOTO: AKIB ABDULLAH

Run to Give: A Charity Run

MOHIMENUN HOQUE MAHIM

If you could solve a little portion of a huge problem by running, would you not take part in it? On September 24, 2017, a project of Marriott International 'Run to Give 2017' was held, where over two hundred and fifty people participated. The charity run was arranged by both Le Méridien Dhaka and Four Points by Sheraton in an effort to raise funds for the non-profit organisation 'Room to Read'. The initiative strives to eradicate illiteracy, working round the clock all over Bangladesh and the world.

Rakhi Sarkar, country Director of Room to Read, Bangladesh, says, "Room to Read focuses on both primary and secondary school kids so that they can develop a reading habit." She further adds, "We try to teach young girls the decision making skills so that, in the near future, they can take hold of their own lives and live according to their wish."

The event started at 7 a.m. in the morning and the distance was spread over 10 km starting from International Convention City Bashundhara (ICCB) to Kanchon Bridge and back to the starting point. Tight security and closed off roads for the runners' safety and comfort were ensured. Although hot and humid, all the

runners, organisers along with guests had bright smiles on their faces. Emon Hussain, one of the participants and winner of the marathon, says, "The atmosphere here is really refreshing and welcoming. Hopefully, I will be able to take it on next year too."

Mr. Gavriel Constantinos, G.M. of Le Méridien, comments, "The charity run so far has been really successful this year as more people seem to be joining in for the cause and hopefully, next year, it will be

even more successful." Along with that, upon asking why running was chosen as the medium for collecting funds, Arman Al-Huda, Director of HR of Le Méridien tells Star Youth, "I believe that running helps us bring people together." The special guest, Mr. Shafin Ahmed from the famous band Miles, in his speech said, "Thank you all for coming and joining us for the run, it is a wonderful initiative and the country at a time like this needs more people like you. Today, we all run to give

and hopefully, will keep on giving to the society."

The wonderful event had to come to an end, however, it ended with words of appreciation from both the GM of Le Méridien and Four points by Sheraton. Along with handing over the donation cheque to Room to Read, medals were awarded to the winners of the run, and finally, Mr. Shafin Ahmed's brief yet wonderful singing closed the event with a positive note.



PHOTO: AKIB ABDULLAH