



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSVED

# ROBIN HOOD THE ANIMAL RESCUER

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

Afzal Khan, an actor by profession, who is widely known as Robin Hood – The Animal Rescuer, has been taking care of stray and differently abled dogs and cats and providing them shelter at his own house since 2010. 53 cats and dogs which are all victims of physical or mental trauma stay with him in Khilgaon. He nurses them with proper medicines and attempts to restore their confidence by nurturing them.

"In 2010, while returning home from work one rainy night, I suddenly heard a mild cry through my car window. Out of curiosity, I decided to look for the crying voice," says Afzal. "I found some kittens in a shopping bag under a nearby street lamp. When I inquired about the kittens, the pedestrians said that a man had dropped them early that evening. I picked them up, brought them home and took them to the vet the next day. Sadly, I was unable to save them as they were not properly treated." The incident gave Afzal the drive to work for animals.

He began with rescuing cats and soon realised that he needs to know their proper healthcare needs. As many of the cats that he rescued suffered from severe malnourishment, it was important for him to know about their dietary requirements. So, Afzal started to educate himself and seek advice from many animal experts.

In 2015, he was appreciated for his efforts towards animal welfare by several national and international media outlets, earning him the title of Robin Hood, a friend of the four-legged beings. "I never really intended to gain publicity, but when Voice of America and BBC approached me, my challenges in the field of animal welfare came under the spotlight," mentions Afzal.

Gradually, rescue requests, even for dogs, started to pile up at his doorstep. Taking his efforts to the next extent, Afzal founded Animal Care Trust Bangladesh, an NGO with several existing board members. Major Shafiqur Rahman shares Afzal's workload as the vice chairperson. Sazzad Zubair is the general secretary while Tayeba Nasrin is the treasurer of Animal Care Trust Bangladesh. Members



of the board of trustees also include Sanjib Saha, Pavel Islam, and Md Maksuduzzaman.

Barrister Tania Amir takes care of the legal affairs and provides necessary advice for legislative issues. During rescue operations, Special ADC Nazmul Shumon helps the team by providing them with special facilities enabled by the ICT division.

"Currently, the dogs and cats stay in my house. However, I need a permanent place

and more helping hands because I want to provide shelter and aid to more and more animals," asserts Afzal. "Shockingly, many foreign-breed dogs and cats are not fed or treated properly. We take care of many such animals as well." Currently, alongside Afzal, his father funds the initiative, which has only eighteen young volunteers.

"Transporting injured animals from the rescue locations to my house or to the vet is also a challenge," says Afzal. "Even during rescue missions, we have to carry our heavy equipment on a bike. I try to serve their food and medical expenses on my own. However, an ambulance would be a great help."

Afzal plans to establish an animal sanctuary for injured cats and dogs of Dhaka and hopes for support from other animal lovers. His team also hopes to start a programme where leftover food will be collected from houses and distributed once a day to street animals. To learn more about Afzal's work, visit Robin Hood – The Animal Rescuer's Facebook page or log on to Animal Care Trust Bangladesh's website. Afzal's door is open for visits from animal lovers six days a week from 8 am to 2 pm.



PHOTO: PIYAS BISWAS

## PROTIGGA FOUNDATION organises medical camp for underprivileged kids

RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIRA

Shishuder Jonno Aamra is an organisation that gives shelter to 40 underprivileged individuals who are mainly children of sex workers, homeless orphans and street children. Hazera Begum, a gallant woman, took the responsibility of these kids to run the organisation with the aim of giving them a better chance at life.

These children live with Hazera, who they address as Amma, in three small

rooms in Mohammedpur. Though cared for, these kids are still at risk of skin diseases, eye infections and other health issues.

Protigga Foundation's mission is to empower people and communities in situations of poverty, illiteracy, diseases and social injustice. In association with Shishuder Jonno Aamra, the management of Protigga Foundation along with some volunteers, organised a medical camp for the children. Pediatrician Dr Femina Rahman, who is also the

founder of Revive Medical and Laser Care Services Limited, gave free medical advice to the children at the camp.

Ekram Hossain, the general secretary and Syeda Wahida Mehnaz, treasurer of Protigga Foundation, were also present. The event was hosted by the chairperson of the foundation, Razia Rahman. Dr Femina Rahman and Hazera Begum were presented with flower bouquets as tokens of appreciation from the organisers. The foundation also arranged lunch for the children and the volunteers.

Protigga Foundation has been working with Shishuder Jonno Aamra for the last five months. They further plan to expand the partnership with a daycare facility, to shift the group of children to a better area for a good livelihood, which includes proper education, extracurricular activities, food, medicine, proper hygiene and other facilities. Protigga Foundation strives to bring positive changes through economic and social programmes that enable women and children to realise their potential.



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## YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES

### Imagine Europe Idea Contest 2019

Imagine Europe is an idea contest inviting everyone, of all ages and nationalities, to present their vision of Europe in 2050 in a short written and video-recorded pitch. 5 participants will win 500 € and will be invited to fully funded international workshops starting from June 2019.

DEADLINE: February 28, 2019 | Competition

### Scholastica Business Summit II 2019

Scholastica Young Entrepreneurs' and Economists' Forum is organising the second session of the premium high school business and economic competition. This year's events include the favorites from last year and more. Register online to participate.

DEADLINE: Ongoing | Competition

### Commonwealth Shared Scholarships 2019-20 in UK

Commonwealth Shared Scholarship Scheme is a joint initiative between the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and UK universities, including the University of Birmingham. It jointly supports scholarships for students from developing Commonwealth countries, who would not otherwise be able to study in the United Kingdom.

DEADLINE: March 14, 2019 | Scholarship