

# THE DAILY STAR ICT AWARDS 2019

Innovation is seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought, said the Nobel Prize laureate Albert Szent-Györgyi -- and this is exactly what the four organisations and individual felicitated at The Daily Star ICT Awards last night have done. They have done the mental gymnastics and came up with products and services that have enhanced our everyday lives. In short, they are legitimate sources of inspiration -- a point that the newspaper wants to highlight and broadcast by way of this flagship event.



**FAHIM MASHROOR**  
Chief Executive Officer, AjkerDeal.com

Category: Digital Commerce  
Winning Company: AjkerDeal.com

Modelling itself on global trailblazer Amazon, AjkerDeal.com has gone on to become one of the leading business-to-commerce marketplaces in Bangladesh within five years of its founding in 2014.

Today, the website attracts well over 50,000 daily unique visitors, hunting for products ranging from clothes to footwear, cosmetics to accessories, tableware to home decor, electronics to automobiles and foodstuff to fitness equipment at competitive prices.

In short, online shoppers can buy a mindboggling array of products from more than 10,000 of AjkerDeal.com's local sellers and merchants. As of now, the platform has more than 5 lakh products listed targeting the rural middle and lower middle-income.

The company has so far processed upwards of 15 lakh orders, 80 percent of which came from outside of the three metropolitan cities of Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet.

From the onset, AjkerDeal.com's plan was to target non-city buyers, said its Chief Executive Officer Fahim Mashroor, who is also a co-founder of Bdjobs.com.

"And we are getting optimum business from there," he said, adding that deliveries will be free of charge from next year.

In the last few years, AjkerDeal.com has strengthened its countrywide delivery channels, partnering with the Bangladesh Post Office and other private logistics providers for fast and cost-effective shipments: its lowest delivery charge is only Tk 25.

The average basket size of orders in AjkerDeal is Tk 400. Over 90 percent of the orders come from its mobile app that has been downloaded ten lakh times thus far.

In 2018, the company earned Tk 9.42 crore.

Mashroor, who is a former president of Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services, said they are very happy to get this recognition from The Daily Star.

"This will certainly motivate us to offer more innovative services -- it will bring more responsibility on our shoulders to continue our superiority in this field," said Mashroor, who earlier received the 'E-Business Of The Year' award in the first edition of The Daily Star ICT Awards in 2016 as the CEO of Bdjobs.com.



**MIKE KAZI**  
Founder and Chairman, Kazi IT Centre

Category: ICT Solution Provider - International Market Focus  
Winning Company: Kazi IT Centre

Kazi IT Centre (KITC) is an IT-enabled service (ITeS) provider with its feet firmly planted in both Bangladesh and the US.

"We are a part of a global IT/ITeS industry that is projected to spend \$550 billion by 2020," said its Founder and Chairman Mike Kazi, adding that the company earned all of its revenue in 2009, the year of its founding, from the US.

By attracting a portion of this business into Bangladesh, not only will KITC enable Bangladesh reach its goals of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) sustainability, it will also continue to bring in revenue in foreign currency as well.

In 2018, the company recorded Tk 43.99 crore in revenue. "This year, our earnings will be much higher."

KITC's mission is to make Bangladesh's IT/ITeS industry a better place to build careers and to make the lives of a million people better through modern technology, Kazi said.

Currently, a 1,000-strong workforce, based in two offices in Dhaka and one in Rajshahi, provides 24/7 services which help business owners and companies complete a wide variety of tasks such as asset management, legal services, administrative duties, ecommerce integration, reporting and research in the US's banking sector and real estate industry.

KITC also has four offices in the US, where about 450 are employed to bring in business.

"We can get as much work from the US as we want, but before that we need to solve our skilled manpower crisis here," Kazi said, adding that KITC wants to recruit 300 more skilled workers in Bangladesh.

KITC's forte lies in providing various outsourcing services like security management, virtual assistance, legal process outsourcing and so on. Currently, their core focus is asset management and asset preservation work in the US housing and financial markets.

Working closely with property management companies, banks and housing authorities across the US, KITC focuses on maintenance, preservation and rehabilitation work for properties.

Expressing gratitude to The Daily Star, Kazi said this is KITC's first award.

"Honouring the heroes will help nurture more heroes in the country," Kazi said, adding that KITC's aim is aligned with the nation's goals of achieving a digital Bangladesh.



**PRINCE MOJUMDER**  
Co-Founder and CEO, Genex Infosys

Category: ICT Solution provider - Local Market Focus  
Winning Company: Genex Infosys

Genex Infosys started its journey in 2012 and within a space of seven years it became the first publicly-listed concern in Bangladesh's ITeS sector, in a testament to the company's brilliance.

Starting with just two employees, Genex went on to become the largest business process management and IT services company in Bangladesh.

"From the beginning we were very systematic," said Prince Mojumder, co-founder and chief executive officer of Genex.

Today, the company has hired more than 4,000 and has expanded its operations in the Asia Pacific region, managing over 150 million customer interactions a year.

Genex, which is managed by a group of young professionals, got the ISO certificate and became a COPC compliant company, which is the global standards of information security, best practices and intellectual confidentiality, said Prince Mojumder.

"This boosted business both in and out of the country."

Currently, Genex is serving all three private mobile operators, along with Uber, Foodpanda, Samsung, British American Tobacco and some renowned banks and financial institutions.

They are also maintaining the back office of international companies like Malaysian DiGi Telecommunications and Telenor Myanmar.

"Actually, business process outsourcing (BPO) can solve the unemployment problems in the country," Mojumder said.

But Genex has also branched into digital marketing and solution, and training and skill development segment from BPO.

The company will earn more than Tk 100 crore taka in 2019, which was Tk 82 crore last year, Tk 69 crore in 2017 and Tk 57 crore in 2016.

Genex is striving for excellence through continuous transformation of business scopes for its clients, which will ensure significant value addition to its customers' business, Mojumder said.

Earlier, Genex Infosys was awarded the Best Large Contact Centre in the APAC region for two consecutive years by the Global Contact Centre Association; the Best Employer Brand by HRD Congress; and the esteemed National ICT Awards 2019 by BASIS.

"And we are very excited to win this award now," he added.



**AYMAN SADIQ**  
Founder and CEO, Robi 10-Minute School

Category: ICT Startup  
Winning Company: Robi 10-Minute School

About 3.5 lakh students are regularly studying through the Robi 10-Minute School, a disruptive educational platform in Bangladesh that got huge international attention in the last few years.

Currently, there are about 70 lakh students in Bangladesh attached with this platform, breaking the geographical and economical barriers either through the mobile apps of Facebook or YouTube.

Before coming into the spotlight, Ayman Sadiq, founder and chief executive officer of the 10-Minute School, used to take classes in coaching centres, where he came across students who were very poor and could not even pay their tuition fees at times.

"The plan came from wanting to do something for them as they had geographical and economical barriers," he said, adding that mobile operator Robi came on board later.

Robi 10-Minute School aims to be connected with the 171,000 schools in Bangladesh. Already 18,129 schools have been equipped with the government's Sheikh Rasel Digital Labs, and Robi is providing the schools with free internet to access the content.

"Even where there are no internet connections, we provide our own developed content through pen drives with the help of a delivery partner."

Robi 10-Minute School has 17,000 video contents and about 50,000 quizzes in their seven YouTube and four Facebook pages.

Sadiq said they have synchronised their live classes into the schools' routines so that their content reaches students at the right time.

"So even though we are keeping the final solution free for our end users, all the schools we are providing this solution to are paying us for the package. In this way, we can easily charge a minimum amount from the schools or institutions, which is making our content-making production growth sustainable."

Robi 10-Minute School currently has content that covers their entire syllabus (www.rob10minuteschool.com) and are also providing the schools with personalised learning management systems.

The company recorded Tk 2.2 crore in revenue in 2018, and Tk 2.70 crore in the first nine months of this year.

Sadiq said it is true that his platform has won a good number of awards in the last few years but winning The Daily Star ICT award is special.

"No doubt this is the most prestigious ICT award in the country and certainly this will help us grow further."



**HABIBULLAH N KARIM**  
Founder and CEO, Technohaven

Category: ICT Pioneer  
Name of the Company: Technohaven

Bangladesh may have made huge strides in the ICT sector and digitalisation in the last decade, but the dream to drive the growth of the economy and change the living standard of people on the back of ICT was sowed many years ago by visionaries like Habibullah N Karim.

In 1986, when he started his business Technohaven, IT was almost unheard of in Bangladesh.

There were a handful of those who had envisioned a future of Bangladesh that would be centred around information and communications technology. They believed that it would touch the economic development of the country and the lives of people.

"In the beginning there were a lot of confusions about the capability of local ICT entrepreneurs. In most cases, the solutions and applications came from abroad and we basically implemented them," Habibullah said.

He led Technohaven from being a startup IT solutions firm to being a pioneer of public-private partnership projects in Bangladesh.

The scenario started to change from the mid-1990s.

"Now, Bangladesh can proudly say that we have many, many world-class enterprise applications. And we have also exported them to many countries."

Habibullah is also the founding secretary general and a former president of BASIS.

He was also the convener of the working group of the ICT Policy Review Committee in 2008 that drafted the Bangladesh ICT Policy 2009.

He represented the software industry as a full member of the prime minister's ICT Task Force between 2001 and 2003 where he spearheaded a number of initiatives meant to accelerate the growth of the software and IT services industry in the country and remove the regulatory and policy level hurdles along the way.

He helped found the ICT Business Promotion Council in 2002 under the aegis of the commerce ministry.

He has a BS in electrical engineering from Yale and attended an executive programme at Stanford.



**SONIA BASHIR KABIR**  
Chairman and General partner, SBK Tech Ventures

Category: ICT Businessperson  
Winning Person: Sonia Bashir Kabir

In the industry of information and communications technology, Sonia Bashir Kabir broke the glass ceiling. Her journey began in Silicon Valley, known as the heart of technology, where she got exposure to technology.

But Kabir had a different vision in her mind: she wanted to make technology accessible and mainstream back in her home country Bangladesh.

It is this yearning that made her pack her bags in the US ten years ago and return to her motherland, and there has been no looking back since. Today, she is one of the more known faces of Bangladesh's ICT industry.

She served as the country director of Dell Bangladesh and director of business development for South East Asia (New Emerging Markets) in Microsoft and chief operating officer for Aamra Technologies.

Kabir currently serves as the vice-president and co-founder of D Money Bangladesh (a fintech startup), also in the independent board director of IPDC Bank, and is vice-president and co-founder of the Bangladesh Women in Technology.

She co-founded tech startups Syntec & Pulse (health), Uqeel.com (legal tech) and Digiland (blockchain) in Bangladesh.

As the managing director of Microsoft for Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, Bhutan and Laos, she got the chance to work with startups. She resigned from the position in April this year to concentrate more on her vision.

"In order to democratise technology, we need to take it to rural areas and empower the youth to have access," said Kabir, now an angel investor and philanthropist.

She has investments in 27 startups and brought them under the umbrella of SBK Tech Ventures, which she founded.

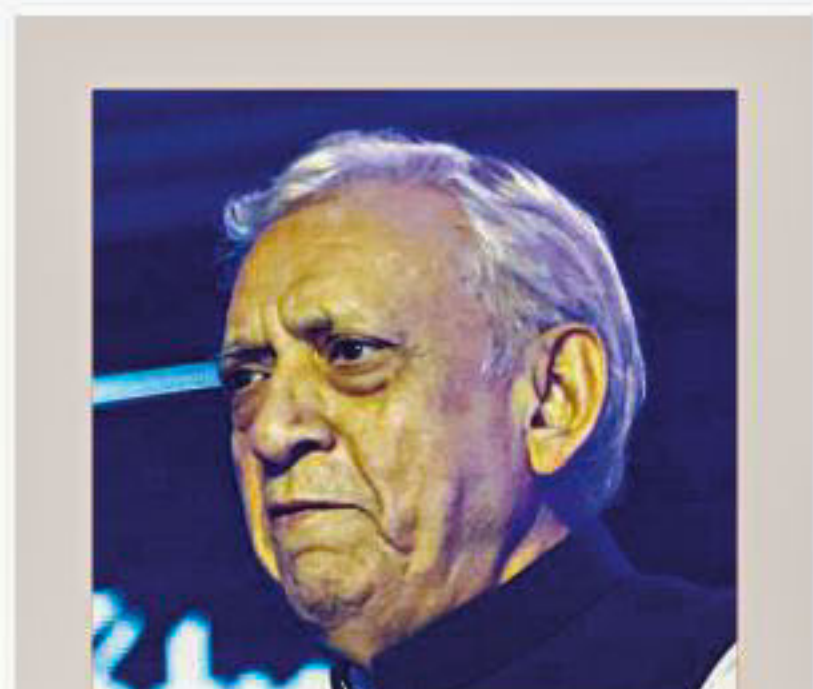
She believes SBK Tech can help startups in three specific areas: access to fund, mentoring and networking.

Kabir actively supports youth in technology and women empowerment with youth-led initiatives all over Bangladesh.

"Youth would be the changemaker in Bangladesh."

She has established the SBK Foundation to empower rural communities with technologies and has set up 64 tech hubs in each district.

Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed her in 2015 to the governing council of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries for a three-year term. She was elected as the vice-chairman of UN Technology Bank in 2017.



The idea behind Digital Bangladesh was to digitise all government services and take them to the people's doorsteps, make governance transparent, keep the costs of running the government low and make the government more accountable.

**GOWHER RIZVI**  
Int'l affairs adviser to PM



The audience at the The Daily Star ICT Awards ceremony at the capital's Radisson Blu Water Garden Hotel yesterday evening. Two entrepreneurs and four firms won the awards.

PHOTO: STAR

## Chattogram ace

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Malan set the cat amongst Chattogram's pigeons with a 38-ball 84 that kept Cumilla in the hunt. Skipper Dasun Shanaka then hit 37 off 21 and Abu Hider blasted 28 off 10 balls, but the mammoth total was always going to be difficult to overcome after Malan was dismissed in the 15th over. Promising young pacer Mehedi Hasan Rana bowled brilliantly amidst all the strokeplay to finish with four wickets for 28 runs.

Earlier, Chattogram's total was built on two blistering fifties from interim skipper Imrul Kayes -- taking over from the injured Mahmudullah Riyad -- and Chadwick Walton.

Imrul and opener Avishka Fernando strung together an 85-run second-wicket stand before the latter was dismissed in the 11th over for a 27-ball 48. Imrul carried on and scored his second fifty of the tournament.

Even Imrul's dismissal in the 14th over after a stroke-filled 41-ball 62 could not stop the flow of runs as Walton and Nurul Hasan plundered 54 runs in the last two overs. Walton remained unbeaten on a 27-ball 71 while Nurul scored an unbeaten 15-ball 25.

The day's first match was a rather dull contest as Khulna Tigers romped to an eight-wicket victory by chasing down the modest 137 for nine posted by Rangpur Rangers with 45 balls to spare.

## One killed

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Locals took him to DMCH. He died there after an hour, the OC said, adding that the body was handed over to the family without an autopsy.

Police could not arrest the driver of the truck or, seize the vehicle till the filing of the report at 9:45pm.

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