

# Torchbearers of Bangladesh

## Raba Khan, Esrat Karim share feelings on making it to Forbes 30 Under 30 Asia list

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

Forbes recently announced its fifth annual 30 Under 30 Asia list, featuring entrepreneurs, leaders and changemakers across Asia under the age of 30.

Two Bangladeshis -- Raba Khan and Esrat Karim Eve -- were inducted in the categories of Media, Marketing & Advertising, and Social Entrepreneurship respectively.

The popular US-based business magazine chose this year's inductees from a list of over 3,500 nominations, surveyed by a group of industry veterans and experts.

Forbes says the inclusion of the young Bangladeshi women is a testament to the way they have disrupted their respective industries and inspired others to do the same.

### I'VE WORKED HARD TO GET WHERE I AM: RABA KHAN

Raba Khan is best known for her comedic stint in The Jhakanaka Project and influence in the Bangladeshi social media sphere. At only 20 years old, Raba has been involved in over 150 brand campaigns, multiple television and radio shows, as well as being the Youth Advocate for Unicef and an ActionAid ambassador.

The young entertainer's inclusion in the list is further elevated by the fact that she is the featured nominee of her category, which puts her on the cover of the Forbes Asia Magazine.

"Incidentally, Forbes is the only magazine that my father reads, and my family is ecstatic about this," said an elated Raba.

In recent years, the presence of Bangladeshis in the prestigious list has become something of a common occurrence, which has played a role in the induction of the duo. Raba says she was inspired to apply for the list after artist Morshed Mishu's inclusion in last year's edition.

"Morshed Mishu is a tremendous artist, he even did the cover for my book. It made me really happy to see his inclusion last year," she said. "At

that point, I wanted to give it [the list] a try."

After the initial selection of her online application, Forbes contacted Raba on February, after which she had to give multiple interviews to them. "Every claim that I had made on my application was researched and verified by them."

"I would be glad to see more Bangladeshi people applying and making the list," she added.



Raba Khan



Esrat Karim

Bangladesh.

Completing her master's degree in Social Entrepreneurship from the University of Colorado, Esrat returned to the country with the hopes of making a positive change in the lives of those less cared for by society.

AMAL Foundation is currently working with more than 52,000 people living in villages across Bangladesh.

The Foundation has centres across the country, which teach victims of rape and child marriage skills that can help them earn a livelihood.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

## ASA commits food assistance for 1.5 lakh families in need

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

ASA, an NGO in Bangladesh, has decided to provide food assistance to 1.5 lakh poor families, which will be worth around Tk 12 crore, said a press release yesterday.

"ASA will donate food support to 20,000 families in Dhaka and 1.30 lakh families across the country who are suffering due to the ongoing coronavirus situation," said the communication department of ASA.

Each family will get 10kg of rice, 2kg of lentil, 2kg of potatoes, 1kg of salt and 1 litre of edible oil, said the release, adding that the money for all of those will come from the NGO's own fund.

Besides, 10 lakh leaflets will be distributed to make common people aware of the risk of coronavirus, it added.

## Create emergency fund for migrant workers

### Rights group urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government must create a fund to sanction grant for Bangladeshi migrant workers who are at the risk of losing jobs due to the coronavirus pandemic, demanded Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit yesterday.

In a statement, the migrants rights group said the government should also arrange interest-free loan schemes for migrant workers' family members back home.

The statement was issued during an online press conference arranged by the organisation, addressed by its founding chair Prof Tasneem Siddiqui.

Referring to media reports, Prof Tasneem said some 1.5 lakh Bangladeshi expatriates have been stranded in different Middle Eastern countries including Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Many of them who do not have valid visa were passing days in hardship, reads the statement.

The rights group also placed some short- and long-term proposals before the government for the protection of migrant workers and their family members.

It said some labour receiving Middle Eastern countries including Saudi Arabia have already announced that they will bear Covid-19 related healthcare costs for both undocumented and regular migrant workers. The government should immediately call upon other countries yet to announce such facilities.

The organisation said, in many cases, migrant workers live in congested and unhygienic conditions. As a result, it is not possible for them to maintain "safe distance". The Bangladesh missions abroad have to make migrant workers aware of taking effective measures for their protection.

The rights group also urged Bangladesh Association of International

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

## Temporary court orders extended till April 11: SC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday issued a circular saying that all the temporary orders granting bail, staying case proceedings and issuing status quo will be extended till reopening of courts.

The decision was taken yesterday at a meeting where Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, Law Minister Anisul Huq and judges of the appellate division were present, the SC circular said.

SC Registrar General Md Ali Akbar issued the circular saying that the decision has been taken as the government extended nationwide shutdown till April 9 due to the coronavirus outbreak.

The courts will also remain closed on weekly holiday -- April 10 and 11. Therefore, they are scheduled to resume on April 12.

Appeals can be filed without certified copy on the reopening day but the copy will be needed during hearing on the appeal in the cases filed under the special laws, the SC authorities said in its circular.

The SC authorities also said one or more magistrates are on duty to deal with urgent cases in every district and metropolitan area across the country.

## Masked men on empty roads worry shopowners

### Groceries, pharmacies in capital weary of robberies; DMP says it's alert

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

Empty streets and people everywhere walking around in masks have made business owners in the capital weary, as a number of recent reports suggest that some criminals are looking at the countrywide shutdown as an opportunity.

Half past midnight on Wednesday, a pickup van stopped in front of Billal Pharmacy at College Gate in Mohammadpur. Three youths wearing masks got down from the pickup and entered the pharmacy, and pulled out knives and machete, as seen on the CCTV footage.

While the employees took shelter in the backroom of the shop, the masked youths swiftly cleaned out the cash register and took away cell phones before vanishing into the night.

On March 28 around 2am, a group of robbers took away 40 tola of gold and valuables after breaking the grille of a four-storied building in Green Road area of the capital, claimed victims.

While visiting the capital's Wari, Narinda, Ray Shaheb Bazar, Laxmibazar and Motijheel areas on Friday evening, this newspaper found most grocery shops closed within 8pm. Some medicine shops were found open but they also locked collapsible gates from inside in fear of being robbed.

"Who will ensure our security when no one around? The robber will disappear from the spot before police comes with support. So we are now operating businesses closing the collapsible gate; we hand over medicine to customers from inside," Mahmudul Hasan, a staff of Khan Medical Shop in Narinda, told The Daily Star.

Shopkeepers in the capital's Mirpur and Mohammadpur area were also requested by law enforcers to close their shops within 8pm for the sake of security, according to sources.

Not only business entities, but security guards of ATM booths are also feeling the lack of security.

Abdul Gani, a security guard of an ATM booth in Jatrabari, said, "Yes, there is fear of coronavirus. Different kinds of people come here. But what I'm more concerned about is security."

"If robbers attack, it would be difficult for me to resist. I have no weapon," Gani told this newspaper last week.

However, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner Shafiqul Islam said there was nothing to worry about, as regular police patrolling was continuing.

"There is no one on the streets, as we are not allowing anyone to move around unless it's urgent," he told The Daily Star recently.

A deputy commissioner-ranked official of DMP headquarters, seeking anonymity, said they are witnessing a change in crime patterns in the city over the last seven days, but it was not reflected properly in their monthly data, as the shutdown began after March 25.

"If the situation continues in April, then we would be able to give a complete picture," he added.

There are 50 police stations in Dhaka, and only 12 to 14 people are now being arrested and produced at courts every day, on charges of various crimes, mostly for their alleged involvement in theft or domestic violence, court sources said.

According to court police officials, just seven days back, police used to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

### CONSERVATION OF SAGARLATA ON COX'S BAZAR BEACHES

## Star report prompts action



PHOTO: COLLECTED

MOSTAFA YOUSUF

News is considered to be the first draft of history; it also happens to be a catalyst for action. At least in this case.

On March 31, The Daily Star ran a report on the return of sagarlata, also known as beach morning glory, on the beaches of Cox's Bazar -- owing to a fall in human movement in the area.

Tourists have entirely stopped going to the beach following a government-enforced shutdown in the country, from March 26, to control the spread of novel coronavirus.

Thanks to the halt in human activity, nature responded in kind. The beach morning glory started to return and this newspaper ran the report highlighting its

ecological benefits, and how it is considered to be a key component of the ecosystem.

The report, which was heavily shared on social media, eventually prompted action from the authorities concerned.

Just three days after it was published, local authorities have kicked off a process to launch a pilot project to conserve sagarlata, a natural barrier against waves and a protector (from erosion) of the seashore.

Md Kamal Hossen, deputy commissioner of Cox's Bazar, visited the area at Dorianagar on Friday to determine further plans.

Authorities intend to conserve a one kilometre stretch of the beachside -- from

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

## Stalled dev works raise concerns

### Shutdown could result in waterlogging, mosquito attack in Dhaka

MATHEWS CHIRAN

With the shutdown in place to contain the spread of coronavirus, many ongoing development works of the two Dhaka city corporations have come to a standstill.

But more importantly, failure to carry out the pre-monsoon sewerage and drainage systems cleaning drive due to the shutdown may end up resulting in serious waterlogging in many areas as well as rise in mosquito population, feared engineers and contractors.

At present, they are not even sure when they will be able to resume the works, let alone finishing those.

Last month, while writing a story about the condition of the city's footpaths, this correspondent spoke to Ejajul Islam Ansari, assistant engineer of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC zone-5), who has been looking after the drainage and median work on Manik Mia Avenue.

A confident Ansari had assured this newspaper then that the work would be over within two months.

But talking to him recently painted a different picture.

"We stopped all the development works around March 26 because of the recent crisis. We don't even know when we will be able to resume," he said.

Saidur Rahman, executive engineer



PHOTO: STAR

### Road and drainage development works on this road in Badda remain halted due to the government-enforced shutdown to stop the spread of coronavirus.

of DNCC (zone 3), is facing a similar predicament. He said drainage, footpath and road development works were going on in Banasree, Niketon, Baridhara, Badda, Gulshan and Banani areas but they had to stop those due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

"We may need to wait for a while before resuming work. Due to the pandemic, work period for the projects might have to be extended, however the budget will remain the same," he said.

Not just the city corporation

officials, but contractors assigned to do the job are also in a fix. Due to the pandemic, they had to leave the work halfway through.

Some said even if they wanted, they would not be able to do the work as most labourers have left the city.

Abdul Hai, a contractor working in DNCC projects at areas including Niketan, Mohammadpur and Uttara, said "We always try to finish the projects before the rainy season starts, which won't be possible this time."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

### মহিলা ও শিশু বিষয়ক মন্ত্রণালয়

### নারী নির্যাতন প্রতিরোধকল্পে মাল্টিসেন্ট্রাল প্রোগ্রাম

### করোনাভাইরাস পরিস্থিতিতে মানসিক স্বাস্থ্য সেবা

মহিলা ও শিশু বিষয়ক মন্ত্রণালয়ের ন্যাশনাল ট্রমা কাউন্সেলিং সেন্টার এবং রিজিওনাল ট্রমা কাউন্সেলিং সেন্টারের চিকিৎসা মনোবিজ্ঞানীদের সাথে নিম্নোক্ত নাম্বার/ই-মেইল এ যোগাযোগ করুন।

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