

YOUTH SKILLS SUMMIT 2020

Thriving in the era of COVID-19 and beyond

The Daily Star hosted the Youth Skills Summit 2020 on July 15, marking World Youth Skills Day, to explore ways to harness Bangladesh's young demographic.

More than 60 speakers, comprising industry leaders, entrepreneurs and young aspirants representing different fields participated in the daylong virtual event.

This year, the day -- which was designated by the United Nations in 2014 with the view to creating a dialogue on the importance of technical, vocational education and training for the youth in securing gainful employment and living up to their potential -- has added importance. The global coronavirus pandemic has led to closures of educational and training institutions and job cuts, leaving students and university graduates in a state of uncertainty about their careers and future.

The summit featured numerous panel discussions, where experts talked about different industries, starting from technology and business to arts and culture. They guided the young attendees about the job market in these difficult times, and the different skill-sets needed to remain employable in the post-pandemic world. The event, emceed by Zunaed Rabbani, CEO, The Right Kind and

it is important to evaluate the educational curriculum, while introducing necessary revisions," added Towhid Hossain. Iqbal Bahar noted that Nijer Bolar Moto Ekta Golpo recently started a weekly online haat, where entrepreneurs interact with students to sell their products.

Session 2: Role of the Youth in Nation Building

RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIRA

The session, moderated by Mir Sohail Rana, AIG Media, PHQ, Bangladesh Police, featured young aspirants working in the Bangladesh Civil Services, who spoke about their preparations for their competitive careers, and discussed the current job market and future expectations. The panelists were: Md Shumon Zihady, Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Public Administration, Dr Sirazul Islam Khan, Medical Officer, RAB 6 (Deputation) and Md Shahabuddin Kabir, Additional SP, O&M, Bangladesh Police. The speakers identified that issues in the current job market arise from lack of appropriate jobs, proper job market analysis, proper guidance and social appreciation. "In Bangladesh, graduates struggle to find jobs according to their qualifications, which forces them to go abroad to

Haque Anter, Organising Secretary, Volunteer for Bangladesh, JAAGO Foundation. "Social ventures require teamwork, because everyone needs to correspond to one issue and chase the dream together," said Sheikh. Rafayat noted that adaptability, networking, public speaking and storytelling are the basic skills required for the success of any initiative.

Session 4: The Importance of Women Entrepreneurs in Business

SADIA TAHSIN

Four female entrepreneurs engaged in the session, moderated by Sayeda Nabila Mahabub, Director, Marketing and Public Relations, Pathao. Panelists Monoshita Ayruali, Director, WebAble Digital, Siffat Sarwar, Co-Founder and COO, ShopUp, Tawhida Shiropa, Founder, Moner Bondhu, Tinker Jannat Meem, Managing Director, Pop of Color Ltd had a brilliant discussion. "Self-confidence and love for your work is crucial," said Meem. On the other hand, Siffat Sarwar suggested that women entrepreneurs need to view criticisms in a positive light. "Hustling and adaptive approaches are important since times won't be favourable and survival is important," said Ayruali. The panelists asserted that they established their organisations as solutions for problems that they personally experienced.

Session 5: Organisations in Pandemic Times: Adopt and Adapt a Winning Culture

SADIA TAHSIN

The fifth session of Youth Skills Summit 2020 was comprised of three leaders from different industries. It was moderated by Tanjim Ferdous, National Consultant at United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF). The panelists were: Sonia Bashir Kabir, Founder, SBK Tech Ventures, Shehzad Munim, Managing Director, British American Tobacco Bangladesh, and Zaved Akhtar, Vice President- Digital Transformation and Growth, Unilever South Asia. The key point of the discussion was that the only constant in the global employment structure is change, and to challenge it, employees need to be equipped with contemporary skills.

"The MNCs, FMCs and financial sectors are already on board with their digital journey and tech-readiness," said Sonia Bashir Kabir. "They are in different transition phases in the data driven decision making process. We need to focus on underlining digital inclusion and enhancing the digital literacy skills for the missing middle, the organisations who are too big for micro-finance and too small for banks. The Covid-19 pandemic has also led us to embrace technology."

Session 6: Transitioning from Academics to Corporate: The Post-COVID-19 Scenario

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

The session, moderated by Galib Bin Mohammad, Head of Marketing, Arla Foods Ltd, was about how this pandemic has affected students and graduates. The panelists were: Mohammad Bakhtiar Rana, Associate Professor, Institute of Business Administration, Jahangirnagar University, Md Saimum Hossain, Assistant Professor, Department of Finance, University of Dhaka and Mohammad and Mahboob Rahman, Vice President, Administration, BRAC University.

With the ongoing pandemic, new needs have emerged. "Tech skills are a necessity, especially when you are to participate and conduct online classes or work from home," shared Mahboob Rahman. Bangladesh has a large number of students graduating every year. "The gap between the skillset the job seekers are expected to have and the ones they actually possess are often mismatched," said Mohammad Bakhtiar Rana. Bridging this gap is only possible if academicians and employers work in collaboration. "The ability to think critically, communicate your thoughts properly to others and work as a team are the three skills most employers look for," mentioned Md Saimum Hossain.

Session 7: Socially Responsible Leadership in Fighting a Pandemic

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

This discussion, moderated by Zunaed Rabbani, focused on different organisations that have taken bold steps during the pandemic to serve the community. The panelists were: Yasir Azman, CEO, Grameenphone Ltd, Tanvir A Mishuk, Managing Director, Nagad, Arif R Hossain, Co-founder of Aamrai Bangladesh, Asif Saleh, Executive Director, BRAC and Korvi Rakshand, Founder of Jaago Foundation.

Since the past few months, adaptability has been one of the prime tasks for all, especially social organisations. "We can't stop working, so adapting to changes is our only option," said Korvi Rakshand. The ability to embrace change also has

been a game-changer during this pandemic. "Soft skills and learning ability are irreplaceable assets, which make a team more efficient," asserted Asif Saleh. A new definition of social distance came into light during this discussion. "We are physically distanced, but socially, I feel, we are very connected to each other," mentioned Yasir Azman. As leaders, every individual should have the ability to spread hope and also prioritise their safety at this time. "A leader should have the ability to rejoice his successes and put up with failures," said Arif R Hossain. "Leadership is not about position. It's about action."

Session 8: Creating Content for a Dynamic Internet Audience

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

Moderated by Md Sohan Haidear, Founder and CEO, Smartifier Academy, 'Creating Content for a Dynamic Internet Audience' shed light on the ever-changing online entertainment industry. On the panel were Rumman R Kalam, Founder of Rantages, actor and Influencer Safa Kabir and Hoichoi's Country Lead, Sakib R Khan. Among the various facets of the content-creation dynamic discussed, the connection with the core audience of the creator was especially emphasised. Rumman R Kalam argued that it is crucial to proactively listen to the first dedicated fanbase of the content, whereas Safa Kabir touched on the expectations that comes with being an actor and influencer. As the lead for a VOD platform, Sakib R Khan asserted that the core values of any streaming platform should respect the intellect of the audience.

Session 9: The Experience of Women in Workplace

RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIRA

The session, moderated by Mahzabin Ferdous Sharma, CEO of WEDO, talked about women's experiences in different workplaces and the skills and mindsets needed to take on different challenges. The panelists were: Nafisa Shadaf, Territory Officer Kushtia, British American Tobacco Bangladesh, Tahsin Noor, Campaign Manager, Foodpanda, Afifa Sultana, Senior Executive, Brand and Corporate Communication at IPDC Finance and Nourin Jahan Rinta, Marketing Executive at The Daily Star. "Being women should never limit us in any capacity. We need to believe that we can do anything," shared Nafisa Shadaf.

The panelists reflected on various skillsets such as paying attention to details, gaining self-confidence, using common sense, adapting to different environments, developing the curiosity to learn and expressing opinions.

Session 10: Preparing for a Post-Pandemic Job Market

RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIRA

The session, moderated by Ghulam Sumdany Don, Chief Inspirational Officer, Don Sumdany Facilitation and Consultancy, shed light on the current and post-pandemic job market, key skills and how youths can prepare themselves for the future. The panelists were: Maher Sabbagh, People and Culture Director, Japan Tobacco International, Md Faisal Imtiaz Khan, Chief Human Resources Officer, Robi Axiata Ltd, Zulfikar Hossain, CEO, Grow and Excel and Fahim Mashroor, Co-founder & CEO, BDjobs.com. The speakers highlighted how the pandemic has made us more adaptable, flexible and susceptible to change. "Do something, to improve your technical skills and utilise this time," advised Faisal Imtiaz Khan. "We have to see this situation with a 'glass half full' point of view to learn more about ourselves and our capabilities," added Maher Sabbagh.

"There should be no substitute for efficiency and no compromise on values, as every job should be respected," shared Zulfikar Hussain.

Session 11: Skill-driven Online Education for an Adaptive Workforce

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

The session, moderated by Rafiath Rashid Mithila, Head of Early Childhood Development Programme, BRAC, shed light on online-based educational services. The panelists were: Tawseef Alam Khan, Founder and Managing Director, Vertical Horizon Education Institution, Rakshanda Rukham, Chairperson, Preneur Lab and Osama Bin Noor, Co-Founder, Youth Opportunities. Online education offers a non-traditional learning environment. In order to train professionals, Rakshanda's Preneur Lab extends necessary technological education and also regards citizens to be more adaptive to newer methods. "The curriculum needs to be revised for the overall development of a student and we must address the wellbeing of our students in these tough times," shared Tawseef. The pandemic has also led to many opportunities, especially for online-based skill development programmes. Youth Op-

portunities organised worldwide mentorship sessions and plans to create their own online platform for extending more support. "Social media etiquette, online adaptivity and telecommunication skills are the basic steps to greater opportunities in this pandemic," Osama said.

Session 12: Creativity and Adaptivity: How Businesses can Sustainably Innovate During COVID-19

SHARMIN JOYA

The session, moderated by Shuvashish Roy, Digital Marketing Manager, The Daily Star, discussed how businesses can coexist with sustainable adaptivity and creativity, while making room for innovation in the pandemic.

The panelists were: Sabbir Nasir, Executive Director, SHWAPNO, Mahtab Uddin Ahmed, CEO and Managing Director, Robi Axiata Ltd, Momin Ul Islam, Managing Director and CEO, IPDC Finance and Anna Kiemen, Co-Director of MA Creativity: Innovation and Business Strategy, University of Exeter.

The coronavirus pandemic has brought many changes in business techniques and the ways of implementing them through creativity. "With the fourth industrial revolution in the offing, we are experiencing the changed market and different customer behaviours, with new disruptions in this process. The pandemic has made the pace of this change faster and inevitable. As a result, we have to adapt to survive," shared Momin Ul Islam. Sabbir Nasir stressed on keeping the food value chain safer and the increased collaborations of digital companies during this crisis. "Different customers are getting used to digital transactions, which played a vital role in optimising the scenario in the telecommunication sector," added Mahtab Uddin Ahmed. Anna Kiemen explained that considering creativity as a problem-solving technique can help sustain the adaptivity.

Session 13: Digital Skills for the Future

SHARMIN JOYA

The session, moderated by Azim Hossain, General Manager, Channel i-Digital, discussed the methods of improving digital skills for resilient youth for the future.

The panelists were: Ayman Sadiq, Founder and CEO, 10 Minute School, Imran Kadir, Founder, Mission Save Bangladesh and Javed Sultan Pias, Head of Digital Business, Prothom Alo.

The pandemic has brought changes in communication, content marketing and other skillsets for the youth. "Communication and etiquette are key digital skills," said Javed Sultan Pias. Ayman stressed that knowing different languages is important for learning skills online. "Due to the coronavirus crisis, there is a rise in technology-based jobs. As a result, there is a transformation in the digital sector. Availing the basic and intermediate technical skills will allow individuals to use their knowledge in the right places," added Imran Kadir.

Session 14: The Changing Entertainment Industry: Opportunities and Challenges for Artists

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

Over the years, it has been an uphill battle to enter and succeed in the entertainment industry, with few seeing sustained success. Moderated by singer and journalist Elita Karim, Editor, Arts & Entertainment and Star Youth, the session featured musician and actor Tahsan Khan, director and writer Ashfaq Nipun and actor Iresh Zaker, Managing Director, Asiatic 360. The panelists talked about their perspectives and experiences in their years as successful ambassadors for the entertainment industry. Tahsan Khan asserted the importance of branding oneself and acquiring skills. He mentioned that if one puts enough hours in their craft, they are bound to master it. Ashfaq Nipun voiced his concerns over the lack of recognition for behind-the-scene artists such as scriptwriters and costume designers. Iresh Zaker, expressed his gratitude for the opportunities he received as an actor, and shed light on the importance of reinventing oneself over the course of their careers.

Session 15: Values and Skills that Build a Better Bangladesh

RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIRA

In a special session moderated by Zunaed Rabbani, Mahfuz Anam, Editor & Publisher of The Daily Star, discussed the importance of democracy, efficiency and ethical values and respecting different opinions, among other matters.

"Never lose your sense of curiosity and the sense of your own self, try to understand what makes you significant and keep your ethical values alive," said Mahfuz Anam. "Ask yourself about your identity, your goals and your dreams. Lead an independent life by being kind and by preserving your self-respect to succeed in your endeavours."



AIRN, was in association with SBK Tech Ventures, Shah Cement and Mountain Dew. Star Youth, 10 Minute School, Preneur Lab and Youth Opportunities were the youth engagement partners of the summit.

Session 1: Our Youth Shaping Digital Bangladesh

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

The session, moderated by renowned photographer, anchor and director Prito Reza, discussed the skills needed to create a 'Digital Bangladesh'. The panelists were: Didarul Alam Sunny, Director, BASSIS, Towhid Hossain, Secretary General, BACCO and Iqbal Bahar, Founder, Nijer Bolar Moto Ekta Golpo. The current pandemic has led to unemployment, and individuals need to be strengthened by technological advancements, necessary for the fourth industrial revolution. "It is important to identify the gaps created due to unemployment, and prepare to step into action," shared Didarul Alam Sunny. During the discussion, confidence, computer skills and communication were identified as mandatory for development. "These skills need to be cultivated from an early age. As a result,

explore other options," shared Dr Sirazul Islam Khan. "Your people must have patience and perseverance to achieve their goals. They should always have a Plan B or Plan C as contingencies," added Shahabuddin Kabir. Nevertheless, the speakers noted that positive participation in administrative cadre and government initiatives are instigating hope for the future.

Session 3: Diana Awards: The Changemakers

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

The Diana Award, established in 1999, celebrates people from different countries for their notable contributions to society. Six young individuals from Bangladesh received the award this year at a virtual ceremony on July 1. In this discussion, moderated by Kazi Akib Bin Asad, In-charge, Shout, The Daily Star, four recipients of the 2020 Diana Award spoke about their aspirations and the different skills they value as young, social changemakers. The panelists were: Shah Rafayat Chowdhury, Co-Founder & President, Footsteps Bangladesh, Sheikh Inzamamuzzaman, Founder, Study Buddy, Muhammad Jahirul Islam, Founder, Ignite Youth Foundation and Rafiul