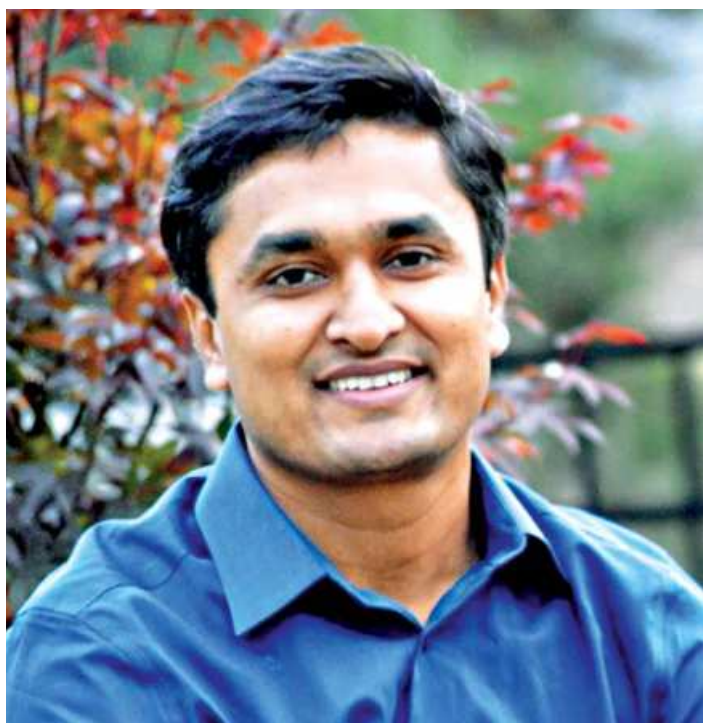


AGENTS OF CHANGE

DHAKA MONDAY FEBRUARY 15, 2021, FALGUN 2, 1427 BS



Md Mizanur Rahman



Osama Bin Noor



Minhaj Chowdhury

Catching up with Forbes 30 under 30 Honourees from Bangladesh

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"In the years ahead, we will also improve the skylight designs for the industries and the residents and expand it accordingly," shares Sajid about the future plans of his organisation in Bangladesh.

"In a country where 1.38 crore people are underemployed and the pandemic also increased the unemployment rate, I see the entrepreneurial journey as the perfect option to better livelihoods and solve different problems around us," shares Sajid. "I saw a major change among the youth about entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship over the last couple of years, which is promising."

Sajid believes the post-pandemic period will be a booming time for new businesses. "From delivery to marketplaces, education

service providers and telemedicine, tech businesses should be on the rise," expresses Sajid. "If we can transform the present pandemic struggles to opportunities and innovate processes to provide better services, the economy of Bangladesh will see a positive shift."

Md Mizanur Rahman
Founder & President, PDF

In 2017, Md Mizanur Rahman was featured in the Forbes 30 under 30 Asia list under the category, Social Entrepreneurs for his organisation, Physically-Challenged Development Foundation (PDF).

PDF is a nonprofit organisation helping disabled youth in Bangladesh. The organisation provides skill-training while trying to raise awareness of disability issues in the country.

"Future job markets will be skill-focused and demand for 21st century digital skills such as communication, problem solving, critical thinking, public speaking and project management among others are on the rise," shares Osama. "Young people should focus on these skills more, as these are necessary to secure a job today."

School and College is providing destitute children with modern study elements, who didn't have any access to even the minimum standard of education before.

In addition to her work at the crossroads of women's empowerment and access to a decent education, Shougat developed a low-cost solar PV irrigation system for farmers, for which she won the prestigious Green Talent award in 2015.

Osama Bin Noor
Co-founder, Youth Opportunities

In 2016, Osama Bin Noor was featured in the Forbes 30 under 30 Asia list under the category, Social Entrepreneurs for co-

learning materials easily on the internet, and we should be focused about learning something, no matter what it is," he says.

Minhaj Chowdhury

Co-founder & CEO, Drinkwell
In 2016, Minhaj Chowdhury was featured in the Forbes 30 under 30 Asia list under the category, Social Entrepreneurs for co-founding Drinkwell, a social enterprise which aims to bring clean drinking water to the people of Bangladesh. Minhaj Chowdhury also won the first-ever 'Under 30 Impact Challenge' at the Forbes under 30 Summit in Boston in 2017.

In many areas of Bangladesh,

A PhD candidate in the University of Illinois at Chicago, Mizanur Rahman is currently working on a publication which will highlight the specific troubles disabled students in Bangladesh face. He aims to present the publication to the policy makers, in order to bring about positive changes. He believes the lack of data about physically challenged communities is a major problem. He is also developing a mobile app, which will assist physically challenged students to communicate about their needs.

"The rise of social entrepreneurs around the country is significantly visible and the scopes for development are increasing," shares Mizanur. "However, even though the number has increased, the impact is not so visible."

Though we have more social entrepreneurs than before, there is a clear lack of diversity. "Most people are working for a specific cause or community, but they should also expand their knowledge on other underprivileged groups as well," says Mizanur, highlighting the lack of support for physically or mentally challenged people across the country.

"It's not about presenting a big idea. The focus should be on selecting a field that one is passionate about and emphasising on that specific goal," he says. "What I want to do is not important, what I can do and if I love the work or not, is a much more significant factor to consider."

Shougat Nazbin Khan
Founder, H A Digital School & College

Shougat Nazbin Khan was featured in the Forbes 30 under 30 Asia list under the category, Social Entrepreneurs for her organisation, H A Digital School & College, in 2017.

Shougat founded H A Digital School & College on her family's land in the northern part of Bangladesh, with the goal of providing education for rural, financially struggling families through digital tools. The school charges a minimal tuition fee, while offering free textbooks, school uniforms and transport. Shougat, who has helped more than 600 children so far, received the Commonwealth Youth Award for Asia in 2016. H A Digital



Shougat Nazbin Khan

PHOTOS: STAR & COLLECTED

founder Youth Opportunities. With the goal of tackling youth unemployment, Youth Opportunities is a global platform that connects young people to valuable skill-enhancing and career-building opportunities.

Youth Opportunities is one of the largest information providing platforms for job seekers in Bangladesh and currently, they are planning to provide more services. "We aim to provide applying options to each opportunity, directly from our website and also provide necessary suggestions and advice, so that anyone can learn more about their skills as well."

The youth of Bangladesh are more aware than before about their potential. "However, accessibilities are limited to the urban areas and only a few people outside Dhaka are aware of different opportunities," says Osama. "We need to decentralise and concentrate more on the people outside Dhaka."

"Future job markets will be skill-focused and demand 21st century digital skills such as communication, problem solving, critical thinking, public speaking and project management among others are on the rise," shares Osama. "Young people should focus on these skills more, as these are necessary to secure a job today."

Osama's advice to young people is on learning. "We can access

water is contaminated by Arsenic and Fluoride, resulting in lack of safe drinking water in several parts of the country. The organisation provides water filtration units that can be run by local communities, creating jobs in the process.

Last year, Drinkwell implemented 170 ATM water booths in several areas of Dhaka and Chattogram, which provides safe drinking water to several communities. Customers can avail litres of water with a Drinkwell Water ATM Card, which charges 40 paisa per liter.

"We plan to expand our water booths in several urban areas across the country," shares Minhaj. "Working on the water crisis is a very big goal. People of Bangladesh have several role models in front of them now. Young people from known communities are engaging in social businesses," expresses Minhaj, who was born and raised in the US.

According to Minhaj, young people in Bangladesh today are not really focused. "They have a tendency to work on several different projects, instead of focusing on one area," he says. "I would advise aspiring social entrepreneurs to focus on one specific goal and that will ensure a much more effective impact on the society."

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