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Why the University of Sussex has become a top study destination for Bangladeshi students

LEO CUTTING & MAHMUDUL HOQUE MONI

In recent years, the University of Sussex has become one of the most popular choices for Bangladeshi students planning to study in the UK. Sussex, which celebrates its 60th anniversary this year, is currently home to approximately 50 Bangladeshi students, who study a range of subjects, from Engineering to Law to Business. The University of Sussex is a leading research-intensive university ranked in the UK top 20 (The Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2021). It is the only English university surrounded by a national park and is located within the south coast city of Brighton and Hove. As a city, Brighton and Hove is popular with its international student population, thanks to its beach location, rich culture and reputation for safety. The university offers courses in a broad range of fields across Humanities, Social Sci-

ences and Sciences. The University of Sussex's Business School is EQUIS and AMBA accredited, and is ranked among the UK's top business schools. The institution is also world famous for Development Studies and has been ranked by QS as the world's top university for the subject for the past four years. In recognition of Bangladeshi students' contribution to the university, Sussex recently introduced a master's scholarship for students from Bangladesh. The Sussex Bangladesh Scholarship is worth £3000, and is available to applicants for a wide number of courses. Sussex warmly welcomes Bangladeshi students in both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Applying to Sussex is simple and can be done through the university's dedicated application portal. The university's Bangladesh Students' Society actively contributes to the diversity and culture of the institution. Since its formation, the society has been successfully organising



International Mother Language Day at The University of Sussex.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX various events. Last year, the society celebrated Bangladesh's Victory Day and International Mother Language Day at the campus with several hundred students participating in these programmes. At these events, international students not only learned the history of Bangladesh, but also enjoyed the country's rich music

and cuisine. The society assists incoming students from Bangladesh with necessary information about accommodation and life at Sussex. It also collaborates with the university's Students Union to organise events, which enhance the capacity of Bangladeshi students in many ways. Bangladeshi students choose to study at Sussex for several reasons. For many, the fact that Sussex is ranked number one in Development Studies in the world is a key factor. Bangladesh is developing very quickly and so, the knowledge and skills offered by Sussex are critical. In addition, top-class faculty members and supportive staff make academic sessions meaningful and enjoyable. The university provides students with excellent facilities and a rich environment for learning. The campus offers numerous amenities, including libraries, on and off campus accommodation, computer labs, open fields, playgrounds for children, gymnasiums, a health centre, shops,

restaurants, a post office, societies, and clubs. Bangladeshi Sussex alumni are serving in key sectors in Bangladesh, including academia, government, business and development organisations. Many former students have gone on to serve with distinction in international agencies. The university strives to provide the bridge between current and former students so they can provide support and advice to each other. Anyone wishing to know more about courses at the University of Sussex can register for the upcoming Masters Online Open Event on March 6, 2021. The authors are respectively: Senior International Officer for Central and South Asia at the University of Sussex, MBA graduate of the University of Sussex Business School; International Student Ambassador of the University of Sussex, and a PhD student at Sussex with Bangladesh Prime Minister Fellowship.

YOUNG ACHIEVER

Digitising Bengali

DU graduate wins Incheon National University's Outstanding Corpus Thesis Award

RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIRA

Sazia Mehnaz, a former student of the Department of Linguistics at Dhaka University, recently won an international award for her research work on the Bengali language. For her postgraduate research on 'Cognitive Challenges of Anaphora: A Study on Bengali Pronominal Expression', she was recently awarded the Outstanding Corpus Thesis Award from Incheon National University, South Korea. In linguistics, anaphora is the use of an expression whose interpretation depends upon another expression in context, mainly a figure of speech in which words repeat at the beginning of successive clauses, phrases, and sentences. Anaphora resolution, which means resolving what a pronoun or noun phrase refers to, is one of the most important areas in Natural Language Processing. To detect certain ambiguities, machines must learn an algorithm, which is generated by humans. Sazia followed Hobbs' algorithm to detect Bangla anaphora and explored the basics of Bengali pronominal expressions. Previous research on anaphora resolution in Bangladesh was done from a Computer Science-based perspective, whereas Sazia focused on approaching her research from the perspective of Linguistics. Professor Dr Syed Shahrier Rahman was Sazia's supervisor during the research tenure. Often, when using Bengali on certain machines, there are several ambiguities seen in the usage of nouns and pronouns. Sazia's research aimed to overcome such adversities. Her work shows the promise of making the day-to-day usage of language easier in our modern world. For example, in space travels, certain signals could be detected from spacecrafts that could enhance and specify communication techniques. As a result, detecting these ambiguities will open up further opportunities to communicate in different



PHOTO: COURTESY OF SAZIA MEHNAZ

languages such as Bengali, opening up more prospects for native Bengali speakers. "I wanted to work on a topic combining natural language processing and linguistics for my thesis. There are many ambiguities when it comes to the use of nouns and pronouns in Bengali. Through my research, we can understand why those ambiguities arise and how we can overcome them," shares Sazia, who is an Associate Linguist at a private software company. "This is just a basic research project. It will be completed after an extensive and more detailed process, with enough data and resources. While other languages are being modernised day by day, Bengali is still lagging when it comes to digitisation. To digitise Bengali, we will need a richer and more developed corpus to further broaden aspects of research in this field." Sazia completed her Master's with first-class second position, on the merit list. She plans to go for higher studies in Computational Linguistics. "I want to thank my family, teacher and my loved ones for supporting me throughout the process," adds Sazia. As research on Bengali linguistics is quite limited, Sazia's work will further inspire others to contribute in this field. More research on Bengali will further help to preserve and protect our mother tongue.

YOUTH IN ACTION

ENCOURAGING AN ETHICAL APPROACH TO PET ADOPTION

SHAH TAZRIAN ASHRAFI

In 2017, Orni Hasan found a disheveled kitten around Dhanmondi Lake, deciding to keep him. Before the decision, she looked for safe adoption options, but could not find any. That was when the unfortunate reality of a dearth of safe, formal, and ethical adoption options caught her attention. Stumbling across unbearable stories of cruelty inflicted on adopted and street animals, she started Paws And Tails (PAT) in September 2019. Her driving principle was getting vulnerable cats and dogs off the streets, and ensuring safe homes for them.



Members of PAT have adopted pets, and also look after stray animals around their neighbourhoods.

PAT is an online adoption platform that helps animals find homes and facilitates safe and easy adoptions. If a person finds a helpless cat or dog, they inform the page and fill out a form. Then, PAT posts about the animal all over their social media platforms, and reaches out to interested clients. A thorough interview follows, which helps to confirm a client's eligibility. After a client is approved, they are required to sign a contract that renders it



PHOTOS: SHANTO LAWRENCE COSTA

Team members of PAT.

tough for people to badly treat or abandon the animals they adopt. "The main purpose of PAT is to eliminate the need for buying or selling animals, which supports the very unethical breeding industry, and puts them in risk of neglect often times," Orni says. Once PAT was up and running, the initial response seemed positively overwhelming, which encouraged her to accelerate the process of solidifying the details as to how the organisation would function and what procedures it would follow to ensure safe homes for animals. However, despite the encouraging feedback, PAT has been facing challenges since their inception. One persistent obstacle is that some people do not react very well to the rigorous questioning that PAT employs for fully confirming the animals' safety. "Sometimes, people question why we are going to this length for stray local cats and dogs," Orni says. Abolishing the pervasive discrimination between local and foreign-bred cats is also one of PAT's principles. In the past, certain clients' weakening commitments also posed challenges to PAT

because when they returned the animals, having failed to take care of them, it took a mental toll on the animals to be shifted to another home. "At times, people don't take the legitimacy of PAT seriously. They think they can do whatever they want with the adopted animals even though the contract they sign with us is legally enforceable," Orni says about clients whose commitments fall flat. "Moreover, we have a policy of sterilising and annually vaccinating the animals from the client's end, since this process has been scientifically proven to be risk-free and well-suited for domestic cats and dogs. But at times, individuals did not keep their word, and we had to take the pets back. Some even refuse to pay a service charge of BDT 250, which we use to sustain ourselves." Orni adds that PAT is undergoing 'Societies Registration' at the moment, and soon, they plan to branch out throughout Bangladesh. They have already started their process of expansion in Chattogram. "In the near future, I want PAT to expand into a comprehensive space that deals with not only safe and effective adoptions but also things like having vets, pet supplies, and foster care," Orni says. Until now, PAT has facilitated more than 260 adoptions. "Without PAT's directors, Mahin Inan, Tanvirul Islam, Nikita Rahman, and Oittri Hasan and our hard-working team members, it would not be possible to come this far," concludes Orni. The author is an undergraduate student of International Relations at Bangladesh University of Professionals. Write to him at tazri-an1234@gmail.com.