

Women in technology: beyond the cliché

As the Iliad depicts, people used to worship Athena, daughter of Zeus who was known for her wisdom, warcraft, and handicrafts. It was Athena who wielded Zeus's aegis in the battle of Troy. Therefore, there should be no doubt about her ability and worthiness.

Likewise, there should be no doubt about the abilities of all the women in our country who has been putting in their time and effort to make a place for themselves. We have Athena in every one of them.

It's a man's world — that's what the song used to say. That was more than fifty years ago. You'd think times have changed, but not as much as one would have hoped. The number of women in certain sectors is still limited to a point that just reminds us of the infectious stereotype that people still hold, not just in our country but all across the world. One common cliché is that women are not good at technology. While reality tells a whole different story.

The prejudices held against women are just that, prejudices. Everywhere they have ascended, they have proved themselves. Take Ruby Paul for example.

"I had always been good at math and enjoyed working with technology. So, when the chance presented itself, I got myself

admitted in SUST. Today I work in the field that I love," said Ruby Paul, a programmer at the head office of one of the leading banks in Bangladesh.

Faizah Farzana is another sagacious presence who found her passion in working with robots. She is the Vice President and founding member of UIU Robotics, and even she had to digest words like 'Girls are just trouble.' Faizah responded with her work. She's already worked on line follower and maze solver robots and a number of other projects that command applause.

"People see you as a girl first, you have to make them see what you are capable of," she said pointing out that it's disheartening but not impossible to make your mark if you are determined.

If you think you must have a university degree to work with technology, you are mistaken. As Farhana Rahman, Senior Vice President of BASIS (Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services) points out. If you are interested and truly want to be part of it, you can study yourself and still make a difference. Farhana Rahman is also the first woman in the country to reach such a position at BASIS and she was very articulate about her journey.

As the CEO of UY Systems, a software company, she has been in the tech world for almost two decades. If you think you are having a difficult start, think again. Farhana Rahman started her journey in the tech world in 2003. Back then, it was a herculean task to take such a leap for a man. Imagine her struggles as a woman.

"We've had confirmed clients declining our projects simply because our company was owned by a woman. They didn't feel confident that I will survive in the industry," she recalled. But despite all these discouraging events, she never gave up. "It's always been challenging for women. I urge the younger generation not to give up."

The younger generation is often discouraged by what people say about the tech world, but Farhana Rahman thinks it's the opposite. "I think the Tech World is a better suiting field for women. They can actually do better and the working condition is much more convenient for us. More so in the modern world. You are already using a lot of technology. You just have to step up and stay updated. It's much easier these days. I had to start with a poor Internet connection that barely worked."

"It's seems challenging to start, but once you pass the initial challenges, it offers endless possibilities. As long as you don't give up, you can achieve great things," says Sumaiya Afrose Suma, who's currently working as a lecturer of Civil Engineering at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology. "Everyone was sceptical when I got myself into engineering. But I have proved myself and all those scepticisms have turned into support and pride," she added gleefully.

The stereotype itself is just silly if you think about it. The first programmer, Ada Lovelace was a woman. And let's not forget a certain Marie Curie while we are at it. Or Margaret Hamilton. Her code got humans on the moon after all!

There are plenty of examples all around us, one only has to look. What everyone involved and successful in the tech world does agree on is that there's absolutely no reason why the cliché should linger in the modern world. If one has the knowledge and willingness to fight for the position, one can mark their spot and eventually rise like Athena herself.

By Ashif Ahmed Rudro

#PRESS RELEASE

Magical Threads commemorating Bangladesh's 50 years

In a brilliant move to glorify the artisanal skills of the craftsmen of Bengal and to commemorate Bangladesh turning 50, House of Ahmed, an ethnic luxury couture, has teamed up with Bibi Russell, fashion icon extraordinaire, to host the fashion show of the year.

In an outdoor press conference held by the gazebo on the cool afternoon of Thursday, 18 February, the idea of Magical Threads Runway 2021 was revealed at Radisson Blu Dhaka Water Garden. Headlined by Bibi Russell and House of Ahmed, expect the fashion show to be just as iconic if not more. In fact, expect it to be a true testament to Bangladesh's heritage and ethnicity, which is the entire vision of this endeavor.

Marking Bibi Russell's comeback in the fashion scene, Magical Threads will feature the heart and soul of Bangladesh. "I want to portray the magic and incredible work of the artisans of Bengal. It's fascinating to me how just a single thread can be intertwined with another, and another still, to create immaculate clothes and designs," muses Bibi, an artist renowned for her patriotism shining through her designs and a true conqueror of international fashion weeks, not to mention the founder of Fashion for Development. "Celebrating this ability while showcasing my honest work is what



Magical Threads hopes to accomplish and we're sure we will be triumphant in our efforts," Bibi further shares.

In a bid to appreciate the label "Made in Bangladesh," Ahmed Tuhin Reza, founder of House of Ahmed explains, "Bangladesh is known for its diversity and heritage. Its legacy translates beautifully on tapestries, weaves and designs that are quintessential only to Bengal. At House of Ahmed, we are purely motivated to revive this dying art and preserve the true essence of our culture. Magical Threads is simply a concerted effort shooting for the same stars."

Behind the glitz and glam of the fashion show, therefore, stand a much bigger picture – to multiply the economic value

of Bengal's artisans, uplift their lives and celebrate 50 magical years of Bangladesh.

Standing parallel to this initiative and among the attendees of the press conference were Tanzila Elma, Co-founder of House of Ahmed, Alexander Haeusler, Managing Director of Radisson, and Farzana Shakil, a household name that demands no introduction and the esteemed makeover partner of Magical Threads. Other partners include Sunsilk, Radisson Blu Dhaka Water Garden, Mutual Trust Bank Limited, FB Footwear Ltd and the event planner, Enchanted.

Magical Threads Runway 2021 is slated to make history on March 5, Friday.

By Ramisa Haque

Aarong launches 'Spring Rewards' campaign!

Aarong is announcing its 'Spring Rewards' campaign for its My Aarong Rewards and Club TAAGA members. Members can enjoy TK 500 off instantly on any apparel purchase of Tk 5000 or more. Moreover, there is a limited time offer for customers to become a My Aarong Rewards member by spending only Tk 5000 or more during this campaign period. The campaign ends on 6 March, 2021. Aarong is a social enterprise of BRAC, the largest non-government development organisation in the world.