



Team members, volunteers, and farmers of Krishi Shwapno.

YOUTH IN ACTION

Farming responsibly

LABIBA KABIR

Krishi Shwapno is a blockchain-based agricultural technology platform and business where farmers are connected directly to their business to ensure fair price and safe food for consumers with food traceability.

Sayed Zubaer Hasan is the CEO and Founder of Krishi Shwapno, while Dr A F M Jamal Uddin is the Co-founder and Advisor. The start-up was formed in 2019.

"We want the newer generations to move to modern agriculture, and realise that farming is a flourishing industry," shares Zubayer.

In Bangladesh, agriculture plays a vital

economic role, as the better part of the rural families in the country depend on farming for their livelihoods. However, the vast farming community of Bangladesh do not have access to appropriate knowledge, equipment, or financial backing. Krishi Shwapno started out with the objective to assist these farmers by providing them with timely information, proper technology, and inputs to achieve better yields.

Currently, they offer on-demand harvesting, quality checks, and real-time farming advice, alongside ensuring zero wastage policy from farms to stores, fast logistic doorstep deliveries, and fair prices. Krishi Shwapno creates a farmer's network in specific regions, and elects

micro-entrepreneurs who communicate and monitor the farmers under them. They have 40 micro entrepreneurs and more than 6500 farmers affiliated with them, as of now.

Recently, they organised the Digital Feriwaala Program, where they launched GPS trackable vehicles which will deliver commodities to housing societies, colonies, and individuals, maintaining precautions against Covid-19.

"Our goal is to build sustainable business solutions for farmers, while ensuring safe food for consumers," concludes Zubaer.

The author is a freelance journalist. Write to her at labibakabir99@gmail.com.

NURTURING DREAMS

STRIVING FOR SAFER FLYING EXPERIENCES

RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIRA

Mushfiqul Alam, a senior research associate at the University of Liverpool, UK, was fascinated by aero planes from a young age. He is the winner of the 2020 Royal Aeronautical Society Herbert Le Sueur Award, in recognition of his research into novel systems to increase safety during helicopter autorotation. This award, given to a young person after anonymous nominations, is one of the most prestigious accomplishments in the global aerospace community.

After finishing his undergraduate studies in Aerospace Engineering at University of Liverpool, Mushfiqul completed with academic distinction the Erasmus Mundus double master's degree in "Joint European Master in Space Science and Technology", known as SpaceMaster, with a specialisation in Systems and Controls at the Lulea University of Technology in Sweden and Czech Technical University in Czech Republic. His master's studies were fully funded through the Erasmus Mundus Fellowship awarded by Executive Agency Education, Audiovisual and Culture, EU Commission.

Mushfiqul completed his PhD at Czech Technical University on Flight Dynamics and Control, Signal Processing. "I designed several algorithms during my time at the university, and many of them are implemented in different vehicles," he added. He was awarded as the Best Doctoral Researcher from the Department of Measurement, Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Czech Technical University, in 2015.

Currently, he is a part of the Flight Science and Technology research group in the Department of Mechanical, Materials and Aerospace Engineering, University of Liverpool. His work focuses on human and machine interaction to help helicopter pilots to conduct autorotation maneuvers

in times of emergency landing. During his summer holidays, Mushfiqul usually teaches at MST, in Dhaka. "Our government has taken several initiatives to increase further education and research opportunities in aeronautics and aerospace engineering. I would like to come back home and be a part of that vision," shares a hopeful Mushfiqul.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF MUSHFIQUL ALAM

He added that one of the biggest problems in publishing research in Bangladesh is reproducibility. "Publications are important, but there is no point to research on engineering, if it is not reproducible and implementable," he says.

Mushfiqul feels that with more social awareness and opportunities, aerospace engineering has a lot of potential in Bangladesh. "If this subject is your passion, find where you belong. Aerospace engineering has multiple areas of focus. You need to find where you fit in the big puzzle," he adds, as an advice to those who dream of pursuing a career in this field.

The author is a freelance journalist, and a night owl who likes binge-watching, reading, and writing. Write to her at rasheektmondira@gmail.com.

YOUNG ACHIEVER

An unconventional English instructor

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Munzereen Shahid is an emerging online content creator and educator, from Bangladesh. Through her conversation skills and unconventional methods of imparting knowledge, she has impacted the lives of many. She recently received the Silver Play Button from YouTube, after crossing 100,000 subscribers on the platform. Her YouTube channel currently has over 170,000 subscribers.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF MUNZEREEN SHAHID

"When I started making educational videos, I thought no one would watch them and I would stop after making a few," she shared. "After receiving the Silver Play Button, I am inspired to keep teaching English for as long as I can."

A Chevening scholar, Munzereen is an instructor at Robi 10 Minute School. Her course, "Ghore Boshe Spoken English" has over 55,000 registered students as of now. Her book of the same name is also available for purchase. Currently, she is a master's student of Applied Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition at University

of Oxford.

She began her journey as an educator during the pandemic. "I made my first video out of the intention to be productive," she shared. The video soon garnered millions of views.

From motivating her to post her first video lesson to helping her with university applications, Munzereen's friends have always supported her.

Over time, teaching and making videos became a coping mechanism for Munzereen. "Initially, I had planned 30 videos on spoken English. My lessons are for those who are afraid to start conversations in English," she added. Currently, her YouTube channel has over 95 videos.

After completing her undergraduate education in English from University of Dhaka (DU) in 2018, she did her master's in Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching from the same institution, before applying to study abroad. "My experience as an instructor at Robi 10 Minute School helped me immensely during the application process," she said.

Attending online classes at University of Oxford is a new experience for Munzereen. She feels that their teaching system focuses on students' individuality. Although she is yet to start on-campus classes, she is excited about the programme that she is enrolled in.

"There is a common perception in Bangladesh that English students want to be university teachers. While teaching is a popular choice, there are many more career options for English graduates, such as content writing, blogging, and journalism," she added.

Munzereen also reflected on the different opportunities in freelancing. "I have a lot more to do. By joining an institution as a full-time teacher, I do not want to restrict the possibilities," she said.

Munzereen's second book, "Shobar Jonno Vocabulary" was launched at this year's Ekushey Boi Mela. Her future projects include a children's book and an IELTS course.

The author is a freelance journalist who likes reading, planning and scribbling. Write to her at mislammonamee@gmail.com.

INTERVIEW

Challenges and prospects for young journalists

ELITA KARIM

Rita Nahar has been a journalist for over twenty years. She started out as a freelance writer, while she was a Sociology student at DU, contributing to different publications. Rita was an avid reader of magazines such as Begum and Bichitra from a young age. Her interest in journalism grew from her love for facing challenges, and writing. She joined Ajker Kagoj as a reporter in 2001, and three years later, she joined Doinik Shangbad, where she was responsible for the women's page, Shorbojaya, and the lifestyle page, Jibon Jemon. She was the news editor of the programme, Desh Jure, on Ekushey Television. She joined Boishakhi TV in 2008, where she worked at the national desk, and later, moved on to reporting. She has been serving as the Women Affairs Secretary at Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU), since 2020. In a candid chat, Rita shares the challenges of being a journalist, and more.

What role does DRU play in encouraging youth journalism?

DRU is an excellent platform for young journalists, providing ample opportunities for seniors and juniors in this profession to work together to solve problems, and discuss various issues. Our special training programmes are designed to be youth-friendly. Our magazine, Reporter's Voice, and women's platform, Konthoshor, high-light experiences of young journalists.

I would like to add that there are more than 1,800 members at DRU, and only 140 of them



Rita Nahar.

are women. However, more and more women are joining DRU steadily. I believe that encouraging women to take the lead in conversations about their careers is important. I, along with the other women at DRU, are emphasising on leadership roles for women and girls at our organisation, and in journalism on the whole. Under my initiative, for the first time, six female journalists were honoured by DRU, on International Women's Day.

What were some of the challenges you faced as a young journalist?

Being underpaid remains a downside of this profession. Though our salaries have increased a bit over the years, they are still far from enough. Working on three to four news reports every day was another challenge. We hardly had the time to write in-depth, special features. Even then, we were questioned about our lack of participation in features. As young journalists, opportunities to raise our voices on such issues were limited.

There has been a rise in citizen journalism, especially amongst the youth, on social media. Most young people tend to share anything and everything on social media, believing it to be news. What are your thoughts on this?

I do not support the concept of citizen journalism. Sharing information on social media comes with responsibility. Information and news are not the same. As journalists, we verify every piece of information and gather additional evidence, before filing a report. More often than not, people just share the raw information on social media, without verifying properly.

What advice would you give to young journalists, and to those who dream of pursuing a career in journalism?

Journalism is a risky field. With the implementation of the Digital Security Act, there are many regulations in place. One of our biggest challenges today is working around these rules, keeping our safety in mind. Moreover, before working on a report, journalists must gather basic knowledge and information about the issue at hand. I have seen many young ones who are not informed or interested enough to deliver proper news. This attitude must be changed. Journalists have to be determined to make positive impacts, despite the restraints in this profession.

The author is Editor, Arts & Entertainment and Star Youth. Her twitter handle is @elitakarim.