



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF BANGLADESH RED CRESCENT SOCIETY

**SPOTLIGHT**

# The vital role of young Red Crescent volunteers in vaccinating the nation

**RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIRA**

The mass inoculation campaign against Covid-19 in Bangladesh began on February 7, 2021. Young volunteers of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) have been playing a key role in running the campaign, and in efforts to build trust in Covid-19 vaccines.

From checking people's vaccination cards to helping them fill out forms and practice social distancing, these volunteers, aged between 18 and 30, have been working bravely since February, in hopes of leading the country towards recovery.

"People always have questions regarding the vaccines. Some of them get nervous. We try to make them smile and keep up a positive attitude as much as possible," shares Shumon Abir Shuvro, a BDRCS volunteer and a student at Dhanmondi Ideal College.

"At first, my father was skeptical about

my participation as a volunteer, but then, he went to get vaccinated. Upon seeing the contributions of my fellow volunteers, he supported me to continue my work," shares Odrija Roy Riya, an active volunteer and a student at North South University (NSU).

More than 2,000 volunteers of BDRCS are working every day across the country to successfully conduct the vaccination process. 350 volunteers are working regularly in the capital, as well as in Nababganj, Savar, Dohar, and Keraniganj.

Jimi Sabrin, a regular volunteer and a student of NSU, added that when BDRCS started planning the campaign, they did not have enough manpower.

"We deployed emergency co-volunteers for the campaign. All of them received proper training and guidelines from health professionals," shared Jahidul Islam Jahid, Deputy Youth Chief, BDRCS, and a student at Tejgaon College.

As the volunteers work at hospitals every

day, they are highly at risk of contracting Covid-19.

Jahid shared that keeping team members motivated when any volunteer gets infected is always a challenge.

Altogether, in Dhaka, 800 volunteers were trained. Most of them are students and work according to a roster system. They work from 9 am to 2 pm, reporting to their respective stations at 8:30 am every day. They have been actively engaged in various activities since the beginning of the pandemic.

Last year, many of the volunteers stayed at the BDRCS headquarters for some time, to limit the spread of coronavirus at their homes.

Taznoor Ahmad Sheonty, Youth Chief, National Headquarters, Red Crescent Youth, stated that despite coming across negative criticism at times, the volunteers feel empowered and motivated to serve the community.

Sonya Halder Brishty, an active volunteer and an A-level student based in Dhaka, shared that most of the time, it is difficult to monitor whether or not people are complying with the safety guidelines. Nevertheless, she expressed that overall, the hospital authorities, general public, and Red Crescent officials have been immensely helpful so far.

Saidul Jahan Antor, a student of Dhaka Polytechnic Institute, is in charge of the Kurmitola General Hospital Vaccination Programme. He asserted that it is inspiring to see volunteers rush out to the spot to help people, at any time of need.

Although it is a risky job, as most of the volunteers explained, they are proud to be able to serve the people of Bangladesh in this time of crisis.

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



PHOTO: COURTESY OF MORIN TALUKDER

**INTERVIEW**

## Building a prominent presence in the e-commerce industry

**LABIBA KABIR**

Morin Talukder, the current CEO of Pickaboo, was inducted in the Forbes 30 under 30 Asia list, under the category of Retail and E-commerce. Pickaboo is a Dhaka-based online store that sells everything from mobile phones to home appliances, apparel and makeup. Morin, a graduate of Anglia Ruskin University, started working with Pickaboo from 2016. Previously, he set up the e-commerce site ehaatbazaar.com. Being among the Forbes 30 under 30 honourees is a point of pride for him. Star Youth, The Daily Star, caught up with him to learn about his goals, and more.

**How did your journey with Pickaboo begin?**  
I looked after Pickaboo's marketing, operations, and a few other departments from 2016 through 2018. After taking over as the CEO of Pickaboo in 2019, I revamped it as an omni general strategy platform. When Pickaboo started out, there were already a few online platforms such as Daraz and Rocket Internet. One of the things we tried to understand was why customers will come to us instead of these platforms. That is how we came up with our agendas.

**What makes Pickaboo stand out?**

Pickaboo was one of the first online retailers in Bangladesh to introduce a monthly installment payment plan, same-day delivery and a customer membership programme, and now, we plan to open 150 physical stores across the country by the end of 2021.

**How is Pickaboo tackling challenges during the pandemic?**

During the pandemic, we ensured same day deliveries with proper precautions. Other than that, we relentlessly offered quality service to our customers, taking feedback from them on how to improve our venture and implemented some of their suggestions as well. One of our most recent analyses showed a customer satisfaction of 98.3 percent.

**What are the future plans for Pickaboo?**

One of our core objectives is to build a prominent presence for Pickaboo in the e-commerce industry. We want to start a gadget hub in Bangladesh, where people can browse through authentic products both online and offline. We are also planning on expanding our platform physically, but we are facing some hindrances due to the pandemic.

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**NURTURING DREAMS**

## Turning a musical passion into entrepreneurship

*Nadeem A Salam, a British-Bangladeshi entrepreneur, has been a tour manager since he was 17. He was also a drummer in a band in his teenage years. At 27, he is a photographer, music video producer, and music director. Born in the UK and raised in several foster families around the world, Nadeem knew music would be the focus of his career, from an early age.*

**RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIRA**

He is the founder of Skesh Entertainment, a music management and production company. His career started with The Red Jumpsuit Apparatus, an American band in Florida.

Nadeem also worked with celebrated bands such as Red Hot Chili Peppers, Megadeth, We the Kings, and As It Is among others.

"I spent a big part of my childhood in South East Asian countries, the UK, and USA. I wanted to develop the music industry in South Asia," he shares. After spending years with the Red Jumpsuit Apparatus, Nadeem formed Skesh Entertainment and expanded his business in six different countries, over 25 cities, across Asia. "Asia was becoming the next big music market in the world, and I wanted to get an upper hand in the regional scale," adds Nadeem. "I had a hunger to develop the music industry in Bangladesh, by partnering with various artists, producers, and entertainers."

Nadeem stated that to create a sustainable music industry, it is important to develop domestic musicians and bands. With that aim, he invited local bands to several international tours.

His passion for photography led him to capture rare behind-the-scenes moments of international concerts.

Furthermore, Nadeem shared that meeting Chester Bennington of Linkin Park was one of the most memorable experiences of his life.

"I am always reminded of how lucky I am to do what I do for a living and I try not to take things for granted," he adds.

Initially, it was challenging for

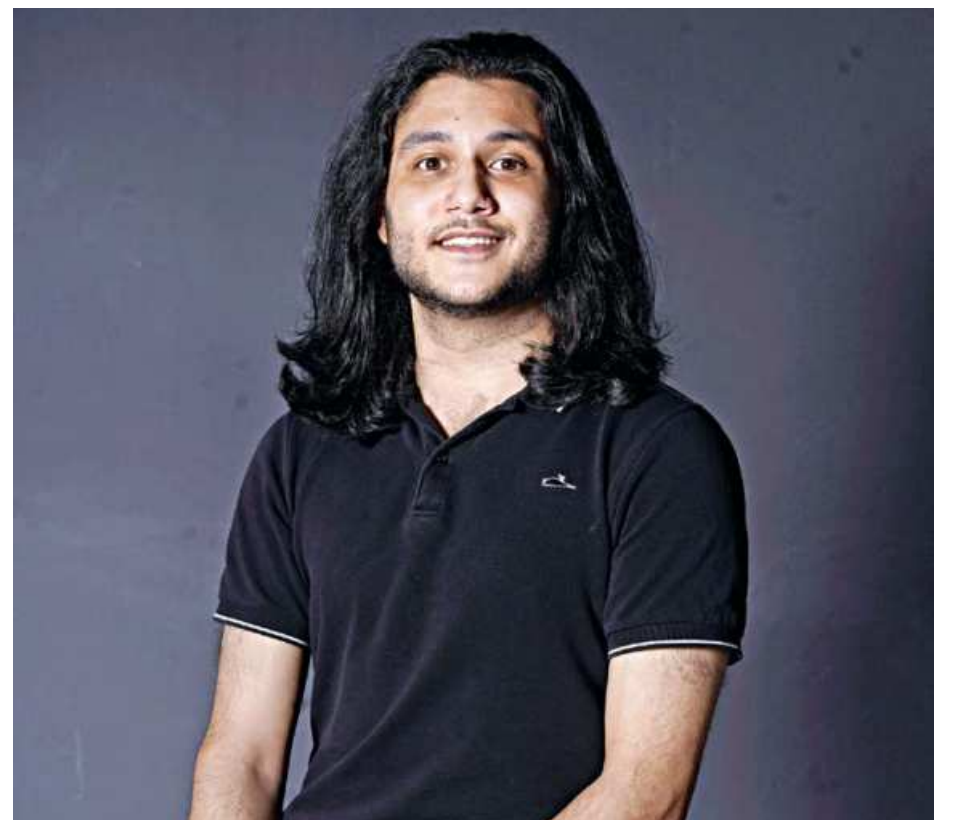


PHOTO: COURTESY OF NADEEM A SALAM

him to make people acknowledge his capabilities, and see him beyond his skin colour, race, and religion. Keeping up his professionalism is crucial for Nadeem, who is currently working on developing the music industry in Bangladesh, by partnering with various artists, producers, and entertainers.

Nadeem plans to launch a show in Bangladesh, titled "Platform Live". For

the show's first season this year, he will introduce 10 volumes featuring 40 different acts from Bangladesh, highlighting different genres and musicians.

"No one invests in music, people only invest in other people. I never signed an act because of their music. I worked with artists because of their individual characteristics and work ethics," concludes Nadeem.