

THE DAILY STAR CAMPUS STARS

IUB aims to create global citizens in this competitive world



“The Daily Star Campus Stars” is a show that highlights promising young individuals who have excelled in their academics and extracurricular activities, alongside securing success in their professional paths.

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

The first episode of the show took place on May 18, 2021, featuring panellists from Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB).

The online programme was hosted by Shuvashish Roy, Head of Business, *The Daily Star*. Dr Zakir Hossain Raju, Professor and Head of Department of Media and Communication, School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, IUB, and Lima Choudhury, Deputy Director and Head of Admissions and Financial Aid Office, IUB, were in attendance.

IUB alumnus Fardeen Amreen, Product Marketing Lead, Grameenphone Ltd and Director of Bangladesh Debating Council, alongside Nazia Nusrat, a student of BBA in Human Resource Management (HRM), School of Business and Entrepreneurship, IUB, were also present.

“Learning techniques have changed drastically as now, we propose interactive learning over instructed classroom lectures,” said Shuvashish Roy.

The speakers noted that to grow into campus stars, young graduates today have to be aware of practical life skills and global politics. They also have to be willing to take on technology as a friend rather than a fear.

“From when I started university to where I am now is a hundred- and eighty degree alteration and it all happened because of the mentorship and opportunities I received as a student at IUB,” shared Fardeen Amreen. “I always link my success to my time in debating at the university. I am a shy person, but being in that stimulating environment really inspired me to come out of my shell. This process was aided by two of my professors, my English lecturer Tauheed Bin Muzaffar and my environmental professor

Tanveer Ahmed Harun. I graduated as an empathetic, confident, and curious person who loves to explore new opportunities.” “After finishing school, I worked as a teacher. Being a student at IUB while working gave me confidence. It also enhanced my networking and communication skills,” added Nazia Nusrat.

Nusrat, who comes from a science background, further shared that facilities like the library and support from IUB teachers made the learning experience more about exploration rather than just securing grades, for her. “The free counselling services always helped me to keep up my mental calmness,” she added.

Lima Choudhury mentioned that creativity, ability to think out of the box, and willingness to work in a team are skills IUB looks for in candidates. The university’s 42 co-curricular clubs, ranging from sports to culture, helps to enhance these important attributes while grooming students. “The pandemic has given way to various financial constraints. We have formed a fund for the financial needs of students, which keeps them away from having to worry about their tuition fees, so that they can fully focus on their studies,” said Lima Choudhury.

“Envisioned by leading educationalists like A Majeed Khan and Sahabuddin Ahmed, among many others, IUB aims to create global citizens,” said Dr Zakir Hossain Raju. He also asserted that the institution is a non-profit venture that solely focuses on improving the quality of education and facilities for students. “Our courses allow interdisciplinary studies to broaden students’ knowledge, while making them adaptable in acquiring mandatory soft skills for their professional lives,” he concluded.

Episode 1 Featuring

 <p>Dr. Zakir Hossain Raju Professor and Head Dept. of Media & Communication School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB)</p>	 <p>Lima Choudhury Deputy Director and Head Admissions and Financial Aid Office Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB)</p>	 <p>Fardeen Amreen IUB Alumnus and Product Marketing Lead Grameenphone Ltd Director of Bangladesh Debating Council</p>	 <p>Nazia Nusrat BBA in Human Resource Management (HRM) School of Business and Entrepreneurship Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB)</p>
---	--	--	--

YOUTH IN ACTION

Promoting eco-friendly menstrual hygiene

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

It was in August 2020 that barrister Mifrah Zahir founded Shaathi Foundation to empower young women and girls by providing clean, safe, and locally produced reusable fabric pads.

Designed especially for underprivileged women who cannot afford sanitary pads at commercial pricing, the foundation aims to address taboos related to menstrual hygiene by training women in how to make washable and affordable sanitary pads.

“Forty one percent of girls in Bangladesh are reported[ly] missing school because of menstruation. We aim to help keep girls in school. Proper menstrual health management is important for promoting gender equity and ensuring that women reach their full potential,



Shaathi Foundation aims to address taboos related to menstrual hygiene by training women in how to make washable and affordable sanitary pads.

which is critical to the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals,” shares Mifrah, stressing on the need to challenge the taboos about discussing menstrual hygiene.

To combat this problem, Shaathi launched the Menstrual Health and Hygiene Education (MHHE) programme, through which women can access support and information, and learn how to prepare for their menstrual cycles.

“But it is a challenge,” Mifrah admits, “as most underprivileged groups have grown up with misconceptions about the topic.”

Shaathi’s cloth pads come in three forms: foldable, overnight foldable, and belt, all designed with a stay-dry top layer, ultra-absorbent core layers, and an anti-leak security layer. They provide effective protection for six to eight months and come with clear instructions in both Bangla and English.

The foundation’s first campaign, “Let’s

Start the Conversation about Menstruation”, initiated a discussion about menstrual health and hygiene practices among 50 adolescent girls in an all-girls orphanage in Mohammadpur, in partnership with Rights and Sight for Children.

In association with Labaid Hospital and East Coast Group, Shaathi hosted its first menstrual health camp, “Safe2Bleed”, on International Women’s Day this year in the Korail and Rayerbazar slums for 200 underprivileged women and girls. They also collaborated with Volunteer for Bangladesh of JAAGO Foundation to conduct surveys in Dhaka’s Rayerbazar and Korail slums, as well as in Narayanganj and Gopalganj, to assess how much the women and girls knew about menstrual hygiene management.

All events followed strict safety protocols required by the pandemic, including cleaning the premises and mandating the wearing of masks. “During our workshops, we only allowed 15 individuals in each room,” Mifrah shares.

The foundation’s forthcoming country-wide campaign, “Let’s Start the Conversation about Menstruation”, will focus on debunking myths about menstruation and increasing self-esteem in young girls to have open discussions about menstrual hygiene.

Mifrah also plans to open sewing centres across Bangladesh to allow women from low-income families to sew pads and sell them in their respective communities.

The author is trainee reporter, Arts & Entertainment, The Daily Star. Email: ashley@thedailystar.net.



Mifrah Zahir.

PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

SPOTLIGHT

Young restaurateurs struggling to stay afloat

ZAREEN NAWAR

In recent years, many enterprises in the food industry have garnered popularity amongst the youth. Restaurants in the country imperatively stay on the lookout for the latest trends in the market and piggyback on them to attract young customers, who are always looking for new experiences. The Covid-19 pandemic, however, has not only halted our plans of going out to eat, but also adversely affected restaurateurs.

“It has been difficult for us to stay afloat. I have had to let go of close to half of my staff members over the last year. We had to work just to break even. The fact that constant expenses like rent and electricity bills were not exempted in some manner, only added to our problems,” shared Mufti Sanullah, owner of Burger LAB.

Although the recent announcement that eateries can serve food keeping half of their seats vacant came as a big relief for restaurateurs, they had to face many setbacks since the pandemic hit.

Ashfaq Rahman Asif, owner of Tarka and 138 East, said that there is no exact blueprint of what restaurant owners should do during movement restrictions caused by a pandemic. “The hindrance in the operations of the food industry does not only affect restaurants. Wholesalers of imports and exports incur losses as well, considering families do not buy in bulk like restaurants do,” he added.

“I personally have had to cancel marketing decisions due to the sudden imposition of lockdowns. Just the basic regulation of keeping restaurateurs informed could have helped massively,” said Ashik Alahi, owner of Burger Republic.

For a long time, restaurants were operating with delivery and takeaway services only. Labib Tarafdar, owner of Madchef, Cheese, and Pagla Baburchi, asserted that these tactics are not sufficient. “Deliveries take up to most six percent of our overall sales. We have had to spend a lot to put preventative measures in place,” he added.

Farazi Ghani, managing partner at Laughing Bud-



ILLUSTRATION: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

dha, said that restaurants are meant to be dined in. As a safety measure, Laughing Buddha has installed an air purifier for their customers.

Shababa Ishmam, owner of Red Window and Bheja Fry, had to use her business savings to keep paying her employees properly. Letting restaurants serve food at fifty percent capacity, is bringing her enterprises back to life in the most preventative way possible. All her staff members wear face masks at all times, and sanitise every spot, including the entrance, frequently. “We have kept the indoor seating service of Bheja Fry closed, but the outdoor seats are open. We ensure that people are sitting, following social distancing guidelines. We also keep extra face masks at the entrance,” she added.

Although the industry was faced with harsh realities since the pandemic hit, as most of the restaurant owners explained, they are hopeful about the future, and determined to serve their customers while prioritising safety rules.

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