

NURTURING DREAMS

Skipping towards Guinness World Records

SHANIZ CHOWDHURY

Skipping is a playground staple for people of all ages. Rasel Islam, a teenager from Thakurgaon, has commanded the sport with two Guinness World Records to his name. On January 2, 2021, he set new world records by skipping 145 times in 30 seconds on one foot, and another by skipping 258 times in 1 minute. To improve his hand-eye coordination and muscle endurance, the 18-year-old trained for six months before attempting to break the records.

Rasel has been skipping since 2017. "People used to discourage me from skipping, saying it is a 'girl's sport'. Nonetheless, I continued practicing, as I was determined to prove my ambitions," he said.

Rasel looks up to Konok Karmakar, who is currently the highest Guinness World Record holder from Bangladesh, with 15 records to

his name. "The fact that someone from Bangladesh won accolades for his talents inspired me. I thought that if he can do it, I can do it too," said Rasel, who applied for the Guinness World Records in 2019.

The young skipper received his official recognition certificates on July 29 this year. "My family was over the moon. People came over to our house to take pictures with me," Rasel added.

This is just the beginning for Rasel as he hopes to break more records in the skipping category, moving forward. He has already signed up for 10 more records. "I plan to participate in the World Jump Rope Championship. I also want to form a team of skippers in Bangladesh, so we can compete on international platforms," concluded Rasel.

The author is a freelance journalist. Email: shanzay-chowdhury@gmail.com.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF RASEL ISLAM



Rasel Islam from Thakurgaon set new Guinness World Records by skipping 145 times in 30 seconds on one foot, and another by skipping 258 times in 1 minute.

PHOTO: QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT



PHOTO: COURTESY OF RAKIB AL HASAN

YOUNG ACHIEVER

Rakib Al Hasan's laudable aspirations

The Bangladeshi medical student won the Outstanding Young Leader of Asia Award

MD MIZANUR RAHMAN HIMADRI

Rakib Al Hasan from Bangladesh won the Outstanding Young Leader of Asia Award 2021 from the Asian Youth Council for his work in children's and women's rights, education, health, democracy, and peace. Youths around the world are doing important work during the coronavirus pandemic. For the first time, the Asian Youth Council, a well-known youth organisation in Asia, organised this award programme to provide such young leaders with opportunities.

Rakib, a final-year medical student of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, is a writer and activist. His role in the Kurdistan Youth Movement, the formation of public opinion by world Muslim leaders in the Armenia-Azerbaijan war, ability to garner moral support for the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, and ethnic recognition of Bengalis living in Pakistan has earned him the award.

After a three-month selection process, the Asian Youth Council announced the names of 10 outstanding youth leaders, on the occasion of the International Youth Day on August 12. Rakib is the only Bangladeshi to receive the award from the Asian Youth Council, in Kuala Lumpur. The winners will be presented with certificates, crests, and medals at the Asian Youth Council's forthcoming conference, once the pandemic subsides.

Furthermore, they will have the opportunity to make fully funded tours in 48 countries in Asia, and actively participate in international projects and development activities of the Asian Youth Council.

"I do not wish to be complacent. There are more opportunities to work for the welfare of others now, and I am happy to do my part," says Rakib, who has been working on youth leadership for a long time.

Earlier, he received the Global Youth Leadership Award 2019. He represented Bangladesh at a 2019 summit by China, marking 70 years of China's independence. He also attended the International Volunteer Forum of Islamic Countries last year, in Azerbaijan.

GUIDES

5 prestigious scholarships for Bangladeshi students

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Pursuing higher education at a foreign university is a dream for many, but the associated costs may be a hurdle. In this case, financial aid and scholarships are helpful. Students often do not apply for scholarships due to lack of knowledge about the opportunities. Let us look into 5 prestigious scholarships for Bangladeshi students.

Fulbright Scholarship

The Fulbright Scholarship provides graduate students and young professionals with opportunities to pursue fully funded master's degrees in the USA. As a prerequisite, applicants must have at least two years of full-time professional experience relevant to their proposed field of study. "This scholarship includes a variety of allowances for potential grantees. It also acts as a good network of scholars from other participating countries," shared Shwe Wai Ching, a Fulbright scholar.

Erasmus Mundus Programme

This programme offers fellowships and scholarships, which cover tuition fees, living costs, insurance, and travelling costs. The amount varies according to the levels of study, duration, and the nationalities of students. The joint master's scholarship is a fully-funded grant sponsored by the European Commission. "The scholarship offers students the opportunity to study in multiple European Union countries," shared Md Shafwan Ul Alam who is set to attend his first two semesters at the University of Lorraine, France.

Commonwealth Scholarship

This scholarship and fellowship is only available for students from Commonwealth countries. The subject areas the scholarship covers are engineering and technology, science, agriculture and humanities, and social sciences. As a part of the application process, students have to scout through the different host universities listed, and jot down the courses that seem fit. "My scholarship is jointly funded by the United Kingdom (UK) Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and the UK university I was



ILLUSTRATION: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR accepted to," said Tasnia Khandaker.

Chevening Scholarship

This scholarship, funded by the UK government's FCDO, empowers recipients to pursue a master's degree at a UK university. It is a merit-based scholarship for young professionals from diverse fields who have at least two years of work experience, and have proven exemplary leadership and networking skills. "The Chevening secretariat and local British High Commissions arrange different events for scholars, offering great networking opportunities with people from all over the world," added Chevening scholar Khaled Hasan.

Stipendium Hungaricum Programme

The Stipendium Hungaricum programme aims at providing scholarships and study opportunities on a wide range of courses. It seeks to encourage the globalisation of Hungarian higher education and its continuous growth, to improve academic and research community international relations. It is currently offered to students from close to 80 countries. "This scholarship provides me with tuition-free education, monthly stipend, accommodation and a health benefit scheme," asserted Maisha Maimuna.

The author is a medical student and a freelance journalist who likes reading, scribbling, and blogging. Email: mislammonamee@gmail.com.

AKHLAKUR RAHMAN

Seeking an equal and inclusive society, Brihonnola relentlessly works with the transgender community. The organisation intends to include transgender individuals in the mainstream society, while promoting gender equality in Bangladesh. Sadikul Islam started Brihonnola in 2018, along with an executive team of 15 members, amongst which most were transgender people.

"We disbursed daily necessities and relief funds to the transgender community in the beginning," mentions Sadikul, who received the Joy Bangla Youth Award 2018. "During this pandemic, we initiated various social-awareness campaigns around Dhaka. A team of Brihonnola's transgender members have been volunteering in front of Dhaka Medical College regularly. They bring in medicines and assist patients. Seeing the smiling faces of city dwellers makes our transgender members feel more accepted. For them, this experience is life-changing." Brihonnola's members also deliver daily



Brihonnola's coronavirus emergency team members help out patients in front of Dhaka Medical College.

YOUTH IN ACTION

Brihonnola reaches out to those in need



Brihonnola's team members distributed iftar boxes in front of the high court during Ramadan 2021.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF BRIHONNOLA

necessities to people's homes, and provide free, emergency oxygen masks.

However, their journey has not been a smooth one. "There is an ill-intending middle man circle at the hospital gates, and we are sometimes mistaken for them," says Sadikul. "On the other hand, some people are still hesitant about getting help from a transgender person because of social stigmas, or family pressures."

Research, cultural, youth networking and relationship development, accessible environ-

ment promotion, and education and skill development are the main departments of Brihonnola. The organisation also has three active executive committees, including the central committee, Chittagong University committee, and Dhaka University committee, with 100 members.

Facilitating financial and educational empowerment for the transgender community, Brihonnola provides counselling, and plans to open a learning centre for transgender people to equip them with necessary skills for var-

ious working environments. The organisation has reached out to multiple corporations about employing transgender individuals.

Brihonnola has been solely dependent on self-funding, which has been one of their biggest challenges. Despite the hindrances, the organisation plans to keep working towards empowering the transgender community.

The author is a freelance journalist. Email: akhlakurrahmancharles@gmail.com.