

YOUNG ACHIEVER

Reigning over the tennis board

SHANIZ CHOWDHURY

Sadia Rahman Mou won three gold medals in singles, doubles, and team table tennis matches in the 9th Bangabandhu Bangladesh Games. She was also rewarded with bronze medals in 2016 and 2019 during the South Asian Games.

Moreover, she was the champion in women's doubles and team games in the National Table Tennis competition back in 2017.

"I just got out of a practice session", exclaimed Mou, during a phone conversation with *Star Youth, The Daily Star*. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, training camps have not been operating in full swing, but Mou still managed to take the prize with no more than a week's practice for this year's Bangabandhu Bangladesh Games.

In the final rounds of the last two tournaments she won, Mou played against her cousin, a five-time national table tennis



Sadia Rahman Mou won three gold medals in singles, doubles, and team table tennis matches in the 9th Bangabandhu Bangladesh Games.

PHOTOS: COURTESY



champion.

"Even though I won, I still learned so much from her during the matches. Her expertise, pressure, and control are so much more advanced than mine," said Mou, who was the singles, doubles and team champion in the Youth Games in 2018.

It seems like table tennis was Mou's calling in life as she has been participating in tournaments from a very young age, in Narail. "I just considered table tennis as one of the many things I was interested in, along with dance, music and recitation.

When I started to perform well in tournaments, people took notice. Soon, I got a call from the national camp. I never imagined playing the sport on a national level," shared the table tennis prodigy.

Mou now has her own centre in Green Road, where she coaches other young table tennis players.

With her mother as her biggest supporter, Mou balances her academic pursuits and athletic goals seamlessly.

However, she considers table tennis to be an unsung sport in

Bangladesh, and wants to be a doctor by profession.

"I wish table tennis was as widely recognised in Bangladesh as cricket. If parents encouraged their children to continue their table tennis dreams beyond leisure hours, we could have foreign coaches training us, and more players could take this sport to international platforms for the country," she said.

Mou is currently in Dhaka, gearing up for the Asian Table Tennis Championships which will be held in Qatar this year.



Key members of Science Bee.

PHOTO: COURTESY

YOUTH IN ACTION

Learning innovatively with Science Bee

AKHLAKUR RAHMAN

Mobin Sikder, a student of Chemistry at Jahangirnagar University, is the founder of Science Bee, an online platform that aims to educate youngsters about science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields.

He started his journey with Science Bee in 2018. "I noticed that from school to university, we are overly reliant on memorising STEM topics, rather than understanding them," says Mobin. "I want to show people that science is a fun subject, and keep them updated on the progress in STEM fields." Mobin won the YEF Global Changemaker Award 2021 in the Grand Global Jury Commendation category recently, for his outstanding contribution towards STEM education.

Members of Science Bee produce skits and shows on different STEM topics for their audience, mainly on their YouTube channel. "The Bee Show is a programme by us, where we practically explain different topics in engaging ways," says Mobin. "In addition, our

blogs and news section highlight our nation's scientists and scientific progress around the globe."

Mobin is a web developer and graphic designer by profession. "YouTube has been my teacher for web development and graphics designing," he asserts. "I created the Science Bee website back in 2019. We run webinars, Q&A challenges, blogs, and online debates."

Science Bee's website reached 2 lakh visitors in September 2020. More recently, Science Bee secured the first position amongst 75 organisations around the country at the BYLC Volunteer Awards 2021, for their commendable work during the pandemic.

"Funding is a huge problem for a non-profit platform like ours. Even after all the hard work we put in, many see us as show-offs who are doing it for quick fame," asserts Mobin. "At the beginning, I was paying for everything from my own pockets. Afterwards, other members of Science Bee started to contribute."

Science Bee currently has 10 core team

members and 20 leading members. "I organise the core and sub-teams, making sure that everyone works in harmony," says Sadia Binte Chowdhury, Head of Operations.

During the pandemic, Science Bee organised health and science-related live shows with various noted personalities under their initiative, "Call It Out: Fight For Depression". They also conducted comprehensive quiz competitions where more than 4,000 students participated.

Science Bee also published two books, "EK Jon Manush" (2020), a science fiction story featuring a futuristic robot and human war by Saidul Hossain Al-Amin, and "Basics of Rocket Science Engineering" by Moinul Islam Bappy.

"Science Bee is still not fully available to rural audiences. I plan to reach out to every corner of Bangladesh with our initiatives," concludes Mobin.

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

NURTURING DREAMS

An Olympiad to promote the habit of newspaper reading

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

The National Newspaper Olympiad (NNO), a platform founded by Labby Ahsan in 2018, intends to encourage young people to develop the habit of reading printed newspapers to acquire knowledge. It strives to establish a positive journalism ecosystem by encouraging the youth to play an active role in this field.

For his work, Ahsan was selected as a Sir Fazle Hasan Abed Ashoka Young Changemakers last year. After completing his secondary education from Rangpur Zilla School, he is currently pursuing a BBA degree from BRAC University.

As reading newspapers is a fading habit nowadays, Ahsan set out to rejuvenate this culture by starting a competition to test people's knowledge about everyday affairs. "NNO

online. Registrations for the third season will begin from November 2021.

Ever since their inception, NNO has been running a plethora of online and offline activities. Their signature event, News Mania, is a quiz competition. For this event, the team prepared a guide with 1,000 important news items of the year. For their Combined Media Summit, famous media personalities conducted workshops on a diverse range of topics.

Ahsan also has two other start-ups, Digital Shikhhok and Media Probe.

Digital Shikhhok is an online learning platform that helps students find answers to questions given in their textbooks. "Our purpose is to provide free and quality education to as many learners as we can," asserted Ahsan.

Approximately 200 teachers are relentlessly



Labby Ahsan

PHOTOS: COURTESY



NNO's Barishal divisional team at the selection round of their first season.

wishes to guide people towards the values of reading printed newspapers. We plan to build the largest media learning platform in Bangladesh," he shared.

As of now, the Olympiad takes place in 44 districts across Bangladesh and around 11 different countries. Both seasons of the event witnessed the participation of over 50,000 contestants, and 500 top performers reached the final stage of the competition.

The selection process of the Olympiad is based on two examinations. NNO offers their preparation guide, Newspeedia, along with other relevant materials for the participants. Before organising the event, the team also asks participants to read newspapers regularly for a specific period of time.

Due to the pandemic, the second season of the Olympiad was conducted

working for this platform, and their 'Educator Panel' deals with 1,500 questions every day.

On the other hand, Media Probe is an online media consultancy firm consisting of scholars, professionals, and researchers who direct marketing strategies for different companies.

Moving forward, Ahsan hopes to globalise the Olympiad. "We are making our international teams strong enough to organise global events. Besides, we will continue promoting journalism by encouraging the youth to join this field," he concluded.

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

MUSINGS

Longing to return to the campus

SHANIZ CHOWDHURY

Remote learning has been a difficult shift for us all, especially junior and senior-year students of universities. Despite it being almost two years since our routines were replaced with unfamiliar social and academic pressures, there is still a longing ache for the familiar faces and the thrills of on-campus adventures.

My coping mechanism at the beginning of lockdown was to binge watch movies and cook eccentric dishes. Slowly, these turned into my Achilles heel because I relied on stress eating and prioritised finishing a series rather than an assignment. Although there was no public health guideline stopping me from exercising in the morning or studying, my motivation lapsed into inertia.

Staying cooped up in my room for days on end exacerbated my social anxiety and proliferated negative self-talk.

With the elimination of hours wasted in traffic or gossiping after classes, we had the luxury of extra time in our hands. Some of us juggled studies and internships while others took more than four courses in one semester. Virtual classroom offered flexibility so we did not have to follow a fixed schedule and could always go back to a lecture if we had any confusion.

This learning method normalised waking up five minutes before classes, and giving presentations in pajamas and disheveled hair.

However, it was not short of nuisances such as eye strain and migraines. Most days, there were more distractions than WiFi bars in my house which stirred me into frenzy when I had group projects or exams. Once,

a student forgot to mute their microphone after giving attendance so the whole class got their riveting commentary on the new season of "Money Heist".

But nothing beats the time when I volunteered to share my screen with the entire class and revealed my Wattpad fan fiction site which was open on one of the tabs. It was a toe-curling faux pas.

Remote learning has its perks, but it is about time we get a change of scenery. When universities open, not only can we engage with the communal world but also attend in-person classes which are a breeding ground for exchange of ideas and thought-provoking questions from both the



ILLUSTRATION: OISHIK JAWAD

students and teachers.

I am also itching to reconnect with my peers over those bizarre drinks that can only be found at Bottola. I miss the buzz of city streets, the energy of people moving toward something in their own ways, and the gratifying feeling of coming home after a long day.

The author is a student of BRAC University, and a freelance journalist. Email: shanzay-chowdhury@gmail.com.