

NURTURING DREAMS

Reyad's laudable pursuits through the camera

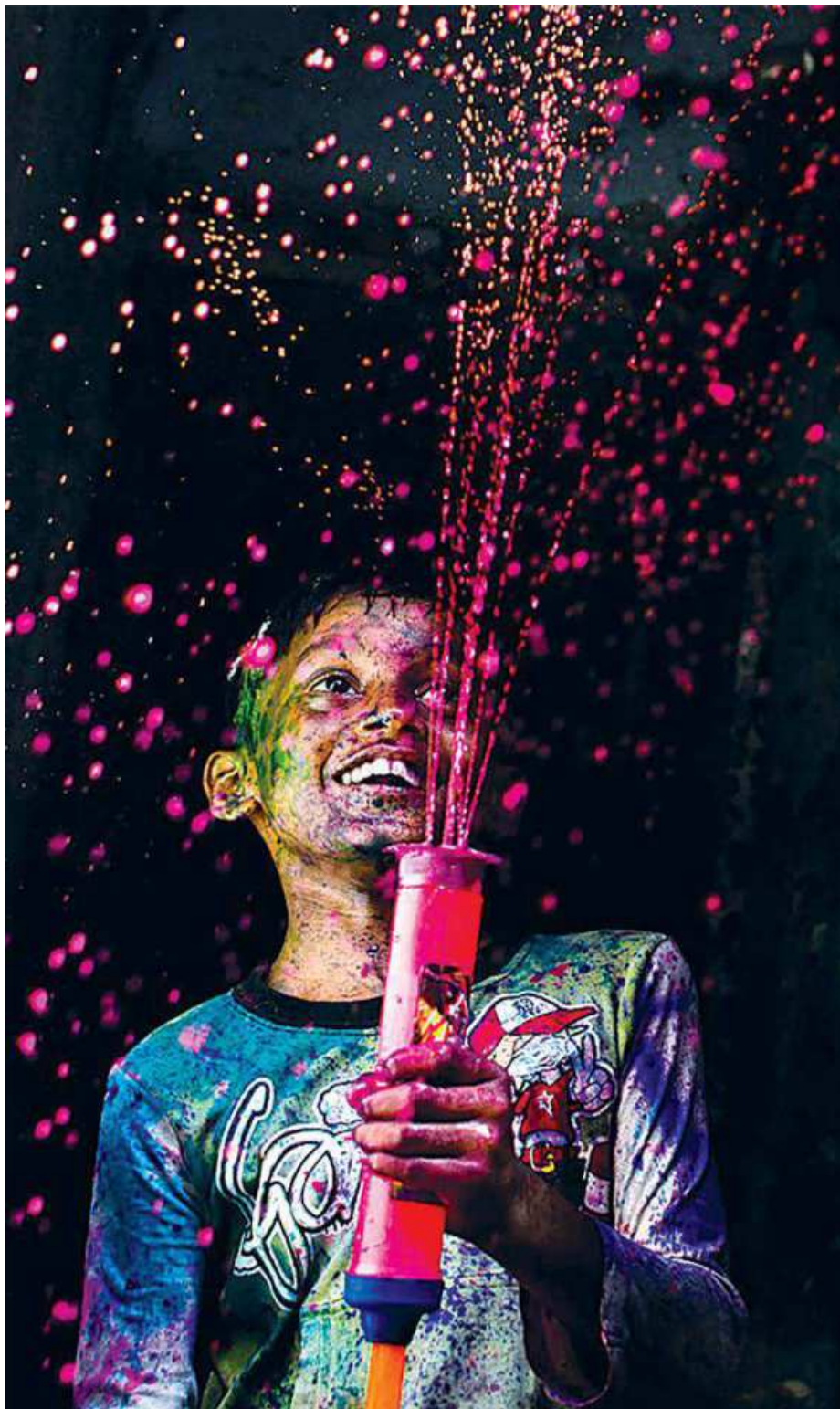


PHOTO: 'COLOR OF JOY' BY REYAD ABEDIN.

SHANIZ CHOWDHURY

Being inspired by magazine photographs, Reyad Abedin was elated to get a phone with a camera when he was just a young kid in college. He majored in Fashion Design, and only did a compulsory course on basic photography. Slowly, his photography hobby evolved into a profession and now, he has a postgraduate diploma from Counter Foto – A Center for Visual Arts.

Abedin's photography project, "The Name of My City is Dust, Smoke and Life", chronicles the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature in his native city, Dhaka. This is his proudest achievement thus far in his career. It was displayed at the Sony World Photography Awards 2020 exhibition at Somerset House in London as well as at the Felix-Schoeller Exhibition in Museumquartier in Osnabrück, Germany.

He was among the winners of Sharjah Art Foundation's Exhibition Vantage Point. Among the several categories, Abedin's "In Search of Lost Tune" took the crown for photojournalism and documentary. It is now exhibited in London and Dubai. Besides this, a visual diary he created during the pandemic is now on exhibit in New York's ICP Museum. He also received the Photographer of the Year Award by Photofee Academy of Fine Art this year. He has been a finalist at different competitions, including Felix-Schoeller Photo Award 2021 and Sony Student Photographer 2020.

He is a recipient of the Sony Student Grant 2020-2021, and a finalist of the Ian Parry Scholarship 2020.

"When I have an idea, I start developing it by writing, roughly drawing pictures, imagining the composition and building emotional connection with the subject. I go to the location to take some primary photos in order to visualise the project," he shares. "It usually takes me six months to a year to complete a project because it is not possible to capture all six seasons in a short span of time." Abedin's photographs locate creat-



PHOTO: NAZMUL HUQ/
COURTESY OF REYAD ABEDIN

ity at the intersection of humans and the environment. He considers his photograph a vehicle to express people's stripped down emotions, past memories, and inner thoughts.

One of his biggest goals is to publish his body of work in a book. His advice to aspiring photographers is to keep practicing and reading novels as they expand one's imagination. Moreover, he advises against chasing instant success or measuring success based on social media and aesthetic consumerism.

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



Rima Sultana Rimu.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF UN WOMEN/
MAHMUDUL KARIM

YOUTH IN ACTION

Rima Sultana Rimu's relentless mission to empower women

AKHLAKUR RAHMAN

Rima Sultana Rimu is one of the two Bangladeshis on the 2020 BBC 100 inspiring and influential women list, from around the world. She is relentlessly working to empower women and eliminate gender discrimination, violence, and child marriage in conflicted areas of Bangladesh.

Rima has been involved in social welfare from a young age. "Back in my school days, I saw many girls drop out due to social stigma, including some of my friends," she says. "I felt an indomitable urge to do something for them. This is what got me started in social welfare in 2018, just after passing my SSC examinations."

In 2018, Rima joined a local woman rights organisation called, Jago Nari Unnayan Sangsta (JNUS), and started her journey to realise women and children's rights in society as well as fight against violence, gender discrimination, and child marriage.

"I visited the Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar under the Literacy and Numeracy initiative from JNUS in 2018 and I was grieved to see so much discrimination against women," shares the social activist.

"The children in the camp were also deprived of their basic rights to education. I wanted to help them, and ended up becoming their teacher."

When asked about her experience with JNUS, Rima shares her thoughts. "Our executive director, Sheuly Sharma treats me like her own daughter, encouraging and supporting me in every step," she says.

"There are many girls like me who begin social work dreaming of building a better society," points out Rima. "However, as girls, we have to face taunts and much negativity. Many good-hearted girls have left social welfare due to this."

Rima is also a member of the Young Women Leaders for Peace programme under the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders.

Under the banner of their "Empowering Women to Contribute to Sustainable Peace" project, the Young Women Leaders for Peace programme intends to promote rights of women and children.

"We are hoping to empower women financially in the near future. I wish to establish either a hospital or a school to serve the underprivileged," concludes Rima.

The author is a freelance journalist. Email: akhlakurrahman-charles@gmail.com.

SPOTLIGHT

Why is an educational consultancy important to study abroad?

ZAREEN NAWAR

Treading into the waters of applying to study abroad can look vast and apprehensive for students, considering there is a surcharge of information on the internet about getting into foreign universities. There are, however, various educational consultancies around Bangladesh, most of which provide services from Dhaka.

IDP Bangladesh provides services and support for IELTS exams. They have branches in other countries around the world. Khaleda Anam*, a student who felt that she wasted a bit of money by going to a different consultancy before taking IDP's help, claims that a rapport between a client and a consultancy is key to achieving one's goals. "I would say I learned a lot more about a variety of universities than I would have on my own," she added.

Educational consultancies also help with statements of purpose, relevant essays, applications, visas and even safety related concerns in foreign destinations. They essentially take upon themselves most of the burdens that students would have had to otherwise struggle with. Maisha Tanzim, who graduated from University of Glasgow, had great things to say about Study Abroad with MACES.

"They helped me narrow down my options and only took BDT 5,000 as security deposit. They helped me throughout the whole process. I didn't have to do anything at all, besides providing them with copies of my documents. They talked to the Bangladeshi representatives of the University of Glasgow, and ensured my direct entry to second year and final year fee waiver. These reduced my tuition fees by 50 percent, which was a big save. I didn't even know about these scholarships," she explained. "My visa processing wasn't as hectic,

because of MACES. My counsellor from there is also helping me with my master's application from a different agency."

Bushra Alam, who has experience working for a consultancy, also shared her thoughts. "I got to communicate with a few students and assure their parents that with all of their requirements met, we can help with the application process. The parents primarily require assurance of a safe living for their children in a different country. Assurances of Bangladeshi student communities where their children will not feel left out is important for them and us," she said.



ILLUSTRATION: OISHIK JAWAD

Executive Trade International (ETI) is a representative of many prestigious universities, including Group of Eight. They deliver tailor-made services for students aspiring to study at universities in Australia, Canada, Malaysia, UK and USA. "Through our key counsellors, who are also international graduates, we provide free yet customised services that best suit individual needs. Our sincere efforts have not only helped us win the trust of parents and students, but also brought us memberships of different distinguished bodies such as IEAA, ABCCI, AEAAB and FACD-CAB," added Sajjadur Rahman, Managing Partner at ETI.

The interest to go abroad for higher education is steadily rising among students. However, studying abroad comes with numerous challenges and unexpected situations. It is a process that needs planning and wise decisions, which is where educational consultancies have a pivotal role to play.

**Name has been changed for privacy.*

The author is a freelance journalist. Email: nawarza-reen@gmail.com.

INTERVIEW

Sonnet Ahammed's aspirations as a young architect

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Sonnet Ahammed completed his Bachelor's in Architecture from BUET, and is currently pursuing his Master's in Computational, Generative Design and Simulation at Anhalt University of Applied Sciences, Germany. He has worked on several noteworthy projects, including "Rethinking Grey Spaces beneath Kuril Flyover". His final year thesis, "Nano Nest 2.0", was recognised as highly commendable under the Global Undergraduate Awards 2021's Architecture and Design category. We recently caught up with the young architect to know more about his aspirations.

How did you develop a fascination for architecture?

I always wanted to work in a creative field, and was fascinated by art and colours from a young age. Architecture was a common point for my career and passion, as it provides me the freedom to think, and has the potential for emotional input. I can visualise my ideas into a creation, while solving social problems.

Tell us more about your final year thesis.

My thesis presents a living system for young professionals, where they can choose accommodation units based on their budgets and needs, thereby building a homogenous community. After collecting data for their requirements, the AI-based software matches the most suitable people together and forms groups, leading to a prefabricated housing unit being personalised according to the new tenant's demands. My project would further allow people to subscribe to extra spaces for a limited time period, for their sudden needs, like setting up a home-office. The free spaces can also be used to create isolation wards for Covid-19.

What is the main idea behind your thesis?

My thesis is based on an app with updates and requirements to let people choose their spaces. The interior walls are designed to be foldable and can be redesigned according to people's needs. This model is economically and functionally sustainable as it would help young students and professionals arrange accommodation near their workplaces and campuses. I am grateful to my supervisors, Prof Dr Mohammed Zakiul Islam and Brishti Majumder, for their guidance.

Why did you choose to work with accommodation units?

Since I hail from Jessore, fitting into a new city was a major challenge, and it took me almost a year to manage a seat at the hostel. I often had to share flats with young professionals, and our schedules did not match. I soon realised that these flats are designed for families, not students or working individuals. So, a lot of common space is wasted and we need to share spaces to find accommodation within a budget. My thesis is a solution to the problem I faced as a new student in Dhaka.

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



Sonnet Ahammed.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED