

INTERVIEW

# Yafiz Siddiqui's aspirations as a young architect

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Yafiz Siddiqui completed his Bachelor's in Architecture from BUET, and is now working at Vitti Sthapati Brindo, a reputed architecture and urban design firm. His current project is based on acclimatising the robust elevated expressway going over Hatirjheel area, by creating spaces and necessary connections. His final year thesis, "School of Thought in 2021: Envisioning a Multidisciplinary and Collaborative Design School in Bangladesh", was recognised as highly commendable in 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 an interest in architecture and design?**

As a kid, I loved to draw everything and everyone around me. Over time, my interest shifted to drawing imaginary spaces. Like most people coming to architecture school, I did not really know what I was up for. But after a year and a half, I fell in love with it.

**Which one is your favourite project so far?**

I designed a graveyard with a small chapel as a third-year academic project. The exercise was highly contemplative, and I had a great time exploring different concepts of life and death, and incorporating them into physical space. Being a young architecture student, that was a transformative experience for me.

**What are some of the biggest projects you have worked on?**

I think my thesis is the biggest and most demanding project that I have worked on so far. I tried to create a design school that encompasses three university campuses as a network of collaborative learning spaces. To substantiate my idea of this post-contemporary design school, I carried out intensive background study on architectural history, theory, and its connection with other creative and technical practices.

**Tell us more about your thesis. What was the main idea behind your design?**

I wanted to reimagine the way we perceive design schools, and create learning spaces that would encourage collaboration among students of creative and technical disciplines. I took lessons from history, architecture theory, the site context, and global examples of collaborative learning spaces. The final design illustrates my vision for a school that is fragmented into small, interactive learning modules and spread across Dhaka University, BUET, and Dhaka Medical College, fusing all three into a super university network, where each module encourages collaboration and co-creation.

**How did you come up with the concept presented in your thesis?**

I expressed to my thesis supervisor that maybe after a hundred years since the Bauhaus, it was time for another change in the architecture education system. I am fascinated by the chronological changes in art and architecture, and how they were affected by socio-political events. I studied examples of experimental schools that started sprouting after the Second World War. These were mostly parallel institutions that dealt with the creative disciplines, and tried to remodel the education system from the ground-up. Learning about the Radicalism movement in Europe also helped me. Many conversations later, I found my core concept. I am thankful to my thesis supervisors, Prof Dr Khandaker Shabbir Ahmed and Maherul Kader, for their support.

**How do you incorporate sustainability in your designs?**

I believe sustainable design corresponds to responsive ideas. I want to find newer ways to involve the users in the decision-making process, so that the outcome is specifically suited to their context, time, and place. It is equally important to pay attention to the impact a design will have on the environment.

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

PHOTO: SHAKIB AHMED LAM/  
COURTESY OF YAFIZ SIDDIQUI



Maksudha Akhter Mou

PHOTO: MONON MUNTAKA

NURTURING DREAMS

# 'I intend to build a better future for women in bodybuilding'

SHANIZ CHOWDHURY

The IHFF Olympia Amateur Bodybuilding Championship held in Mumbai, India, welcomed 30 contenders this year. At the event, Maksudha Akhter Mou made history as Bangladesh's first female bodybuilder to win an international medal. She bagged the bronze medal in the category, 'Women's Physique'.

"The competitors were actually surprised to see a woman bodybuilder from Bangladesh. All of them have been training for 16 to 17 years, whereas, I have only trained for approximately three years. So, this is a huge achievement for me," shared Mou.

Previously, she conquered the Bangladesh Bodybuilding Federation's Bangabandhu National Championship for two consecutive years.

Coming from a humble background, she climbed the ladder of success with grit and tenacity. After

studying at Bangladesh Navy School & College in Chattogram, she went to India to pursue Textile Design at Chandigarh University.

Initially, her family and friends were not supportive of her ambition of becoming a bodybuilder.

Back in Mou's hometown, Chattogram, people were skeptical about a woman training men in the gym. There were not any good training centres for women to shape themselves as bodybuilders, but when she went abroad, she found those options available.

"I had to forge my own path because no other woman in our country entered this field before. I hope that the women who come after me don't have to face the barriers that I struggled with. I have already broken taboos, and will continue to do so. I intend to build a better future for women in bodybuilding," said Mou.

"I have my own trainer who helps me prepare before any competition. Before IHFF, I had to drop

almost 18 kilos within two and a half months so I could build muscle strength and my body could be conditioned to a certain endurance level. It was also very difficult to juggle both my job and training."

According to Mou, men should encourage the women in their lives to pursue their dreams, instead of conforming to gender roles. Besides, there are many good male bodybuilders in Bangladesh, who can help out women who are just starting out, and promote the notion of women taking part in such sports.

"Even though we do not get similar support or sponsorships as cricket, we're still trying to rise above all the challenges," she shared. Mou is inspired by Arnold Schwarzenegger. Her dream is to participate in the Arnold Sports Festival one day.

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Special guests and participants at the festival.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF IUBAT

EVENT

# IUBAT National Career Festival 2021 concludes

Over 5,000 job seekers were in attendance

YOUTH DESK

International University of Business Agriculture and Technology (IUBAT) organised the National Career Festival 2021 at their campus in Uttara. Over 5,000 graduates from public and private universities joined the festival, while more than 85 national and multinational companies took part to hire talents for over 500 vacancies.

IUBAT Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr Abdur Rab, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr Hamida Akhter Begum, Treasurer Prof Selina Nargis, Registrar Prof Md Lutfar Rahman, Deans, Chair, Co-ordinator, faculty members, officials and representatives from participant companies were present at the inauguration ceremony. The festival, which was open for all, was organised by IUBAT Place-

ment Office in partnership with Excellence Bangladesh as the event partner.

Abul Monem, Partex Group, Elite Paint, Matador Group, Ifad Group, Walton, ACI Logistic, Fortis Group, Akiz Group, Kalyar Replica Ltd, Sara Resort, Meleda Group, Rupayan City, and Mbrella Group, among other leading companies, participated at the festival.

The journey of IUBAT started off in 1991, under the guidance of eminent educationist Prof Dr M Alimullah Miyan, as the first non-government university of Bangladesh. Their vision is to educate at least one graduate from each village of the nation. Around 7,000 students are currently studying under eleven departments in the 20-bigha green campus of IUBAT in Uttara.

EXPERIENCE

# Cherished mornings with bhapa pitha and tea

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

During our childhood, we did not have devices to keep ourselves entertained. We enjoyed nature and life -- This is something many of us grew up hearing. We hear stories of villages from our parents and grandparents. They talk about the games they played, the food they enjoyed, and the contrasts in the lives led by different generations. Growing up abroad, these stories always fascinated me. I never got to witness the magic of winters in Bangladesh, and craved for hot pithas.



ILLUSTRATION: JUNAID IQBAL ISHMAM

As winter sets in this year, I am reminded of my first ever trip to my village in Rangpur, where I stayed at my grandma's house. Not only did I enjoy the calmness of the stay, but also the little ways in which our lives are different.

Mornings usually began with *bhapa pithas*, an iconic winter delicacy. The melting *gur* and soft *narikel* tasted divine, especially during the early hours of the day. I sat near the stove, while *nani* made them with gentle care. I enjoyed the winter sunshine with a cup of warm tea and good company.

The village roads beautifully intertwine across fields, besides ponds and many other scenic locations. You can walk around for hours without getting tired, and the picturesque scenery demands to be seen. I watched the sky change colours during sunset, while the fog enveloped the surroundings, giving off a hazy feel. I felt the chill and as I wrapped myself under a shawl; I learnt to appreciate the warmth of little things.

From winter vegetables to late night barbecues, I enjoyed everything in Rangpur. I sat around a bonfire and talked about resolutions. I played badminton in the empty fields and read books amidst the greenery. I talked to my grandma about her childhood and heard old anecdotes. I bonded with people over tea and laughed with all my heart. For the first time ever, I lived the stories I heard as a child.

