

INTERVIEW

Making waves in the world of public relations

SHANIZ CHOWDHURY

Turn Up PR is an emerging firm that has gained a foothold in the public relations (PR) market in just one year. The organisation integrates various tools that extend beyond the traditional media for publicity curation. It aims to promulgate success stories of Bangladesh, particularly about businesses that are based in the outskirts of the cities or abroad, globally.

In an interview with Star Youth, The Daily Star, Umaila Akhter, Co-founder and CEO, and Naina Hussain, Co-founder and Chief Creative Officer of Turn Up PR, share their insights of working in the industry.

How did you start out with Turn Up PR?

Umaila: After spending 12 years working in communication, I saw a gap between traditional, organic, and digital public relations. Naina and I were on the same page about my idea to bridge this gap, so we decided to collaborate.

Naina: I studied in America and worked in the advertising sector, where I learned about the new techniques that were being used instead of traditional media. I wanted to implement those strategies here at home.

What are some challenges you have faced so far?

Naina: As the inception of our company was during the pandemic, we were riddled with uncertainties. Not having an office space hindered building team values. On the other hand, there was a surge of new businesses which needed guidance. Editorial budget of larger corporates decreased due to the economic unrest. So, we tried to help them adapt to the novel challenges and offer solutions around their pain points.

Are there any misconceptions that people have about PR?

Umaila: During business progressions, most people tend to heavily invest on marketing or advertising to build their platforms and maximise exposure. However, PR plays a vital role in building market perceptions in the industry where that business or person operates. People might think PR is only required by com-

panies but individuals themselves could utilise its benefits.

Can you tell us about some campaigns by Turn Up PR?

Umaila: For "Mental Health in an Unequal World: A Campaign Case Study", Turn Up PR partnered up with the leading fashion brand Cats Eye, and renowned artist Morshed Mishu. This campaign sparked conversations about the inequality and stigma surrounding mental health.

With Turn Up PR and Dhaka Tribune as collaborators, the mental health campaigns hosted by SAJIDA Foundation addressed important issues and initiated policy-level discussions among audience from all walks of life.

What changes do you want to see in the PR industry?

Umaila: PR should be part of every company because everyone could benefit from brand awareness, media coverage, and audience engagement. We want to explore untapped areas of PR, such as employee relationship management, corporate social responsibility, and crisis management. We are also very excited to announce that next year, we will launch a new wing called Turn Up Studio.

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Naina Hussain and Umaila Akhter.

PHOTO: COURTESY



In 2018, Faatiha Aayat addressed the International Youth Day Conference at the United Nations ECOSOC Chamber on global warming and climate change. PHOTO: COURTESY

YOUNG ACHIEVER

Faatiha's earnest mission of combatting climate change

LABIBA ANJUMI KABIR

Faatiha Aayat is a Bangladeshi writer, child rights activist, and climate campaigner living in New York, USA.

She is the founder of an organisation called CHIL&D, where she works on climate, health, information, learning, and development.

"Less developed countries are the sufferers. The unequal share of vaccines, as well as the lack of financial support for climate mitigation and sustainable adaptation are issues that need attention," she says.

In 2018, at the age of just seven, Faatiha addressed the International Youth Day Conference at the United Nations ECOSOC Chamber on global warming and climate change. The following year, in 2019, she addressed the 74th General Assembly of the United Nations on child abuse, gender inequality and domestic violence.

In 2020, she spoke at the 1st Annual Harvard Undergraduate UNICEF Club Conference at Harvard University on climate mitigation and sustainable adaptation.

Faatiha was a stakeholder in drafting the Glasgow Agreement for UN Climate Change Conference in Scotland in 2021 as part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Her prototypes of Space Rover Perseverance and Helicopter Ingenuity were nominated for display in the

Jet Propulsion Laboratory of NASA.

In the same year, she was honoured as the Featured Speaker of the UNGA76 Science Summit and as the Lightning Speaker of Global Climate Action Summit at the Georgia Tech University.

In addition, three children's books by her have been published.

Faatiha presents mathematics, science, coding, international news, storytelling, Qur'an recitation and tafsir for children on her own Facebook page and YouTube channel. She also received the Amazing Artist Award in the Ocean Under Thread category at the Advena World Art Competition, and her paintings are on display at the Colors of Human Art Gallery in the USA.

Faatiha was invited to the United Nations Day celebrations at Brooklyn Borough Hall and the International Girls' Day celebrations at UN Headquarters in 2016.

In addition, she received a certificate of recognition by New York State Senator John Liu and Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams in appreciation of her contribution to the children of the Bangladeshi community in New York.

Alongside her academic studies, she likes to stay up to date with news on world politics, climate, and commerce.

"My parents inspire me the most. My interest in mathematics, science, Qur'an recitation, and coding, are all because of their sincere efforts," concludes Faatiha.

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GUIDES

5 thoughtful gift ideas for Christmas

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Exchanging gifts with friends and family is one of the most exciting parts of Christmas, but finding the right gift can be a daunting task. If you are still wondering what to get as last-minute Christmas presents for your loved ones, worry no more as this list has got you covered.

CALENDARS AND PLANNERS

With the New Year arriving, planning essentials would make a great gift. Whether your loved one is a rigorous note-taker or has a habit of making impromptu decisions, calendars and planners always turn out to be handy. You can find a range of these items on online pages, including ones you can customise.

BOOKS

Being an avid reader, I have always loved the idea of exchanging books as gifts. A book is one of the most thoughtful presents a person can receive because the simple idea of associating someone with what you read is special. With discount offers in several bookstores, you could pick up some great reads for your friends and loved ones. After all, is there any pleasure greater than that of reading?

PLANTS

Who does not like a little green corner in their house or workspace? However, since plants

can be a bit of a chore to keep alive, be sure that your recipient actually wants another plant. If the receiver is new to taking care of plants, you could go for a succulent or cactus while snake plants and bamboos would easily please plant enthusiasts.

BAKED GOODIES

Baking something for your loved ones is a great way to show your affection for them. If you are new to baking, try simple desserts like brownies or cupcakes. More experienced bakers could go for seasonal cakes or a box of cookies. A simple way of personalising this gift is by adding notes, telling your loved ones how much they mean to you.

CUSTOMISED GIFT HAMPERS

To celebrate the holiday season, you could come up with a customised hamper for your loved ones. This would save you from picking just one gift, as you can add many small presents in a box or basket, packed with love and care. You could include journals, calendars, baked desserts, chocolates, coffee packets, photo prints, and candles. Depending on your budget, you can also consider jewelry, perfumes, books, plants, mugs, and skin care essentials.

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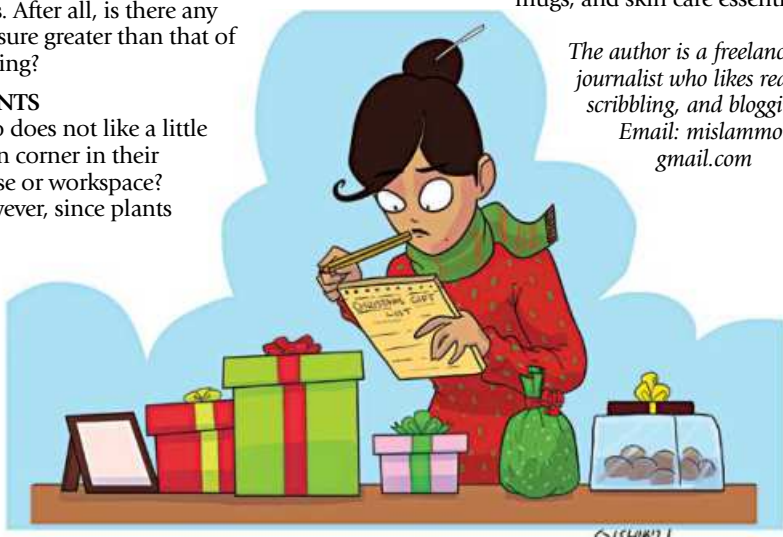


ILLUSTRATION: OISHIK JAWAD

YOUTH IN ACTION

Empowering women through financial literacy

FARAH KABIR

Afruz Tanzi is one of the 19 Bangladeshi recipients of the 2021 Diana Award. She was born and brought up in Sylhet, where she attended Bluebird School and College. Tanzi came to Dhaka in 2017 to complete her Bachelor's in Biotechnology at BRAC University, where she is now a final year student.

She joined It's Humanity Foundation (IHF), an organisation which provides free, quality education to children of rural areas, in 2018.

Tanzi was first assigned to conduct a survey in areas where IHF had their school programmes running.

"While speaking to the families in the rural areas to discern the reasons behind the rising school dropout rate, I found out that children laboured in roadside restaurants, grocery stores or helped their fathers in the local bazaar instead of attending school, to earn some extra money," she says. "It didn't matter if they had access to free education. I also realised that their mothers were not contributing to the family financially."

Tanzi was incensed at this situation but inspired to bring a change in the mindset of rural people. After completing her research, she returned to the IHF's headquarters and asked its founder if she could start a project to provide financial literacy to women in rural areas.

IHF had already instituted a livelihood programme, named "Protibha" in 2014,



The main intention of Protibha is to provide rural women with financial literacy and opportunities to earn so that their children do not have to discontinue their education. PHOTOS: COURTESY OF PROTIBHA



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF PROTIBHA

under which, it sourced out potential women and launched them into the local market. Tanzi restructured Protibha in 2018 by adding two other sections to the already existing 'knowledge development' section: skill development and financial development.

The main intention of Protibha is to provide rural women with financial literacy and opportunities to earn so that their children do not have to discontinue their education.

Protibha boasts the graduation of 122 artisans from different training centers as its biggest accomplishment yet. 90 percent of them are now either household entrepreneurs or job holders in their respective fields.

"With Protibha's training, many artisans have become financially independent and can afford nutritious food and healthcare for their families and themselves," says Tanzi.

Protibha's future plans entail designing a strong curriculum based on their experience in working with rural women and providing a structured literacy about finance. It intends to discover every tradition that Bangladeshi women are skilled in and provide them with a platform to showcase and sell their products. It now looks forward to the day when every community in Bangladesh believes in women as equal breadwinners for their families.

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