

Samiun Alim Saad.
PHOTO: STAR

YOUNG ACHIEVER

The seven-year-old with exceptional talents

By the age of five, he knew extensively about planets and many other complex topics.

AZIBOR RAHMAN, from Jhenidah

Seven-year-old Samiun Alim Saad of Kaliganj is a gifted student. He can solve complicated geometry and algebra problems, and draw maps of different countries in a matter of minutes.

When Saad was just two years old, he could recite the Bangla and English alphabets. At the age of three, he wanted to read English books. He finished reading all books of his sister, who was in the tenth grade. Born in 2014, he enrolled into the first grade in 2020. He moved on to the second grade in 2021.

However, as he was confined to his house

due to the pandemic for nearly two years, he finished studying textbooks of the first and second grades in two to three days. He also acquired a good command over the English language.

In addition, he enjoys reading about planets and the human body. He illustrates maps of different countries, depicting their geographical positions in the world, alongside the mountains, volcanoes, and oceans around them.

He is also well-informed about stars, satellites, earthquakes, as well as the positions and distances of the planets from one another. He can illustrate the positions of the frontiers of certain countries.

"As Saad wanted to read English books from the age of three, I downloaded some English language learning apps on my phone. He learned the Bangla and English alphabets from those. He learned Arabic the same way, and he can read the Quran," smiles Saad's mother, Aysha Aktar Charli. "He likes listening to lectures of famous scientists and orators on YouTube. By the age of five, he knew extensively about planets and many other complex topics. He uploads his own videos about space, mathematics, and science on YouTube too."

Saad wants to be a scientist, mathematician, or space researcher in the future.



Mohammed Shafin Arshad.
PHOTO: COURTESY

YOUTH IN ACTION

Shafin's earnest mission to help those in need

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Mohammed Shafin Arshad from Bangladesh was chosen as one of the Top 10 Young Talents by MonStar Awards 2021 - Asia Young Talent Awards, which aims to recognise young people who inspire others through their contribution to the community.

He is currently studying Computer Science at Multimedia University, Malaysia.

He has been working with Volunteer For Bangladesh, Chattogram district, since 2015. "I learnt a lot through my experiences at this organisation, including leadership and project management skills," he shared.

Under 'Project Waste To Hope', Shafin helped set up four water purifiers and a model toilet for underprivileged communities. This project was nominated in the Sustainable Projects category of the National Youth Assembly 2020.

Shafin was in the student council of his university, where he primarily ensured that every student's rights were preserved. "Our term was hard because it was during the pandemic and most of it was virtual. We made sure that students' mental health did not take a toll, and arranged for financial and food assistance for those who might need them," he explained.

Moreover, his team assisted more than 1,000 international students of the university.

Shafin is also the first international student to be appointed as the President of the IT Society, one of the biggest tech clubs in Malaysia, in 20 years of their history. Shafin came back to Bangladesh in March 2020. He wanted to reach out to lower-middle-class groups who were harshly affected by the pandemic. He started providing support with his family members through the organisation, Mercy Universe.

They distributed groceries to middle-class families, and raised funds for PPE kits, hand sanitisers, hot meal packs, and day labourer wages. By the end, they distributed food to 5,000 families in Chattogram, along with nearly 50 PPE kits, and 15 litres of hand sanitisers. Shafin was the coordinator for the projects.

He wishes to work on more sustainable social projects moving forward.

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

SPOTLIGHT

The dilemmas of students

SANJOY KUMER BARMAN

After nearly two years of online classes, academic institutions began to reopen as vaccines were rolled out. However, considering the recent breakout of the Covid variant Omicron, the country has been pushed into restrictions again.

While online classes have become an accepted alternative, academic institutions are now opting towards physical classes. However, the future is

No new updates regarding the upcoming HSC exams have surfaced yet. "After a lot of waiting, I was happy that we would be sitting for the exams," shared Borsha.

filled with dilemmas.

Lion Chandra Barman, a sixth grader at Madhupur Kakoli High School, did online classes for over a year. "In my village, it is very difficult for me to access the equipment and internet facilities. I somehow managed to do so, but I was finally able to get off the hook when my school reopened physically," he shares.

Lion was also happy to meet his friends and teachers in person, and enjoy his expected learning environment. He finds studying online quite isolating.

No new updates regarding the upcoming HSC exams have surfaced yet. "After a lot of waiting, I was happy that we would be sitting for the exams. Here in the village, girls are forced into early marriages and I am afraid I have to live the same fate if I fail to continue my education in a regular manner," shared Borsha Rani Roy, an HSC candidate from Ruhea Technical and Business Management College.

Siam Sharif Bhuiyan, a student at New Model University College sat for his HSC exams, and had started preparing for university admission tests.

Now, he feels that he will have to stop going to admission coaching classes and the admission tests may get delayed. The results might not come out on the promised dates, which will disqualify his applications to private universities.

Public university and college students might not be able to complete their desired academic programmes within the usual time.

"Switching to online classes and exams already took away a lot of time from our active career years," said Nazifa Raisa, a third-year undergraduate student at Eden Women's College. "We have to start our careers and support

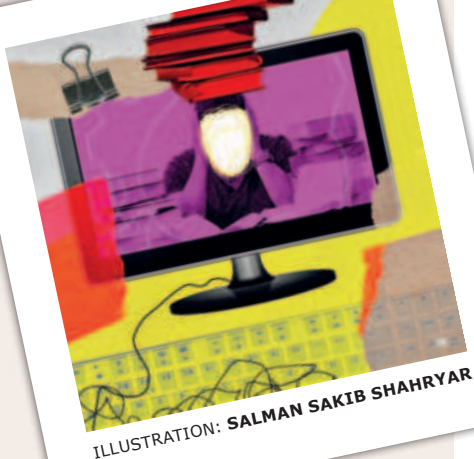


ILLUSTRATION: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

our families. I doubt that the age limit for jobs and retirement ages at government and private organisations will be altered, following the number of years the students have lost during the pandemic."

The author is a freelance journalist.



Jongshon puts up stalls that sells a variety of home-grown products by SMEs and ventures they support.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF JONGSHON

NURTURING DREAMS

A local melting pot of emerging artistes

MORMEE MAHTAB

Jongshon is a collaborative platform that hosts shows, bringing together different local artists, rising musicians, and interesting business ventures with an aim to promote their talents.

Growing up in a cultural family, Pujan Goswami, entrepreneur and the founder of Jongshon, always understood the struggles of artistes. "My long-standing affiliation with art and culture which began with my musical education from BAFA, stretched further as I began attending art exhibitions, theatre performances, musical events and worked in radio alongside other artists," he says.

He wanted to create an inclusive space for artists who didn't necessarily come from an institutional background, where their

art would thrive on ideas and interaction stepping out of the traditional practice of competition.

Jongshon's first event, 'Acoustica' was arranged in 2019. Since then, they have presented 37 young musicians and bands.

Along with hosting live performances and promoting young musicians, their other projects are 'Nondon', which promotes visual art, 'Udyog', which promotes SMEs and young entrepreneurs and 'Greenventures', which highlights eco-friendly businesses. Their events are cleverly curated with musical performances in venues that exhibit art under Nondon, and have stalls that sell different home-grown products by SMEs and ventures under the other two projects. Owing to the pandemic, they had to

suspend their in-person events. "When it comes to offline events, artists through their performances find a way to get direct responses about their work from the audience. There is scope for conversation and an exchange of ideas which helps them improve their craft, which is limited in virtual shows," explains Goswami.

Currently, Jongshon has eight main projects, including 'Scene e Night' for cinema and short-film screenings, and 'Fun-e Khan' for stand-up comedy. The platform intends to launch their website and host year-long events in the future.

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