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PHOTOS: KHANDAKAR TAREK
COURTESY OF: UMMAY HAFSA RUMKY

YOUNG ACHIEVER

RUMKY'S great leap forward

SHANIZ CHOWDHURY

Ummay Hafsa Rumky won a gold medal in women's high jump, setting a national record of 1.81m in the Sheikh Kamal 45th National Athletics.

She is equally proficient in cricket, football, volleyball, and badminton. She started training professionally in high jump from 2015.

From 2017 to 2019, she practiced rigorously for the South Asian (SA) Games, and ended up winning a gold medal. However, the overload of training led to her feet suffering the blow. After four months of treatment, her injuries still persisted, so there were no other options but surgery.

"24 rods were inserted in my shin bones. Doctors said that even after the surgery, my feet won't be completely fixed. I had

low expectations, but I still plucked up the courage to participate in the SA Games, because I didn't want anyone to think I am weak," she said.

Hailing from Sirajganj, Rumky is one of five daughters. Since her childhood, people scorned her for wearing jerseys, and engaging in sports. "My parents tried to convince me to give up. However, I knew I had to keep playing, no matter what. When I started performing well, I earned praises, but some people continue to bad-mouth me and my family," shared Rumky.

According to her, high jump needs more exposure. "Only a handful of people on the field know I made a record because it was not nationally televised. The games need to be shown live and profiles of players should be publicised by the media," she said.

With the hope of participating in the Southeast Asian Games, Rumky continues to make Bangladesh proud.

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

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NURTURING DREAMS

Sadia Rahman wins Gates Institute's 2021 Ingenuity Fund

ZAREEN NAWAR

Sadia Rahman, Program Director of Light to Life, was the only Bangladeshi among the six voted winners of the 2021 Ingenuity Fund, developed by the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health's Bill & Melinda Gates Institute for Population and Reproductive Health (Gates Institute), and supported by Pathfinder International and Bayer.

Each winner received \$10,000 to lead innovative projects on reproductive health. All applicants to the Ingenuity Fund, including the six award winners, are part of the I20 Under 40: New Generation of Family Planning Leaders programme.

Light to Life is a youth-led organisation leading different programmes around reproductive health, mental health, and climate change. Sadia merged the ideas to focus on how women are physically impacted by climate change, targeting Khulna, Barishal, Chattogram, and Cox's Bazar.

She aims to initiate an online platform titled, "School of (Im)Possible", where teachers will teach different art techniques, connecting climate change and environment.

Focusing on behavioural change efforts and awareness on SRHR issues within climate change, her initiative will promote inclusive SRHR and climate education through play-based learning and participatory experience. It will reach adolescents and youths aged between 13 to 30 years from all over Bangladesh. Sadia recently initiated courses on climate education for around 14 institutions and 700 students.

Furthermore, Light to Life organised an art festival, where government policymakers and researchers were in attendance alongside youngsters, to create a synergically engaged dialogue.

During the festival, participants conjured up their discussions or thoughts via mediums of art. Last year, Light to Life organised a hybrid festival for their pilot project, which was well-received.

"I received advice from professors of Johns Hopkins University on how to garner more traffic and engagement online," said Sadia.

Presently, Sadia is working on mental health first aid to help young people identify whether they or the people they are close to, need professional help for their mental health.

Ingenuity Fund winners and their projects will be spotlighted during the 2022 World Contraception Day and the 6th International Conference on Family Planning, taking place in Thailand in November 2022.

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



PHOTO: S M TAUFIQUEL ISLAM/
COURTESY OF SADIA RAHMAN

YOUTH IN ACTION

Accessories to go with your masks

"In between the country's lockdowns - people were going out, meeting friends and family and also eating out at restaurants. I saw that everyone had masks, but they didn't know what to do with their masks when they were not wearing them," explains Tazmeri

LABIBA ANJUMI KABIR

Strap It Up Bangladesh is an online business of face mask accessories. Tazmeri Hoque Mou started the initiative in April 2021, during the pandemic.

As she lived across South East Asia for around four years, Tazmeri was quick to observe that wearing masks was a norm in Vietnam and Thailand even before the pandemic, as a way of combating pollution and viruses.

"Since Bangladesh is a highly polluted country, it should have been a norm for us too," she adds.

Nowadays, masks have



Tazmeri Hoque Mou.

PHOTOS: COURTESY

become an integral part of our lives. The idea behind Strap It Up is to make wearing masks more fun, while maintaining safety. Although the initial idea was purely functional, there was more to it.

"In between the country's lockdowns - people were going out, meeting friends and family and also eating out at restaurants. I saw that everyone had masks, but they didn't know what to do with their masks when they were not wearing them. Some covered their chins, some left their masks hanging from one of

their ears, and some put their masks around their wrists. The mask strap simply lets you keep your mask hanging around your neck, when you don't need it," explains Tazmeri.

She researches for and designs each mask strap by herself.

Tazmeri experiments with her products every now and then. More recently, she added multi purpose eyeglass straps to her product line.

The author is a freelance journalist. Email: labibakabir99@gmail.com.



Tazmeri designs each mask strap herself, experimenting with her products every now and then.

SPOTLIGHT

The many facets of debating

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Debating, as an extracurricular activity, requires patience, compassion, and persistence, besides strong research and presentation skills. It is crucial for debaters to be respectful towards their opponents, while presenting logical and constructive criticism.

For Wasif Amin Khan, a student of IBA, DU, and Debating Excellence Lead of Bangladesh Debating Council (BDC), one of the best ways to prepare for tournaments is to read up on different topics, especially current global affairs.

BDC aims to make English debating more common among students through their different programmes.

Sourodip Paul, former Debate and Development Lead at BDC, and a student of IBA is motivated by debating to analyse different issues critically, and empathise with others. "If a debater is speaking after their teammate, they must listen carefully in order to ensure consistency," he further added.

Shirsha Songshoptak, a student of BUET, was always fascinated by art, history, economics, and international affairs. However, it was tough for him to find a push to learn more about these topics, especially as they did not directly coincide with his academic path. Debating gave him that push.

Meanwhile, Jumana Tanuja, a student of BUET and Equity Officer at BDC, shared that most of her lab classes and debate tournaments usually clash with one another. Once offline classes resume, it will be tough for her to dedicate enough effort behind debating.

Many debaters face discrimination on the basis of their accents. "Being a woman of colour whose first language is not English is difficult at international tournaments because judges have a bias for clean and polished accents," shared Nayara Noor, a student of BRAC University and Equity and Compliance Lead at BDC.

Acquiring visas for international tournaments is difficult for many debaters, and tickets are quite expensive. Most institutions cannot support their students in these endeavours.

However, online tournaments, owing to the pandemic, have made debating more accessible. "Students from across the world are embracing

online debates, appearing regularly in prestigious tournaments worldwide, and proving that there is very little correlation between one's debating prowess and background," concluded Shudipto Ahmed, a student of DU, and Vice Chair of BDC.

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



ILLUSTRATION: OISHIK JAWAD