



Marzan Akter Priya won a gold medal in the singles event at the 2019 South Asian Games.

PHOTOS: MONON MUNTAKA

YOUNG ACHIEVER

A promising star of KARATE



SHANIZ CHOWDHURY

From the age of 10, Marzan Akter Priya knew that her calling in life is karate. She used to watch seniors and juniors in karate training from a window in her classroom. However, she did not pluck up the courage to join them because such activities were strictly prohibited in her household.

She eventually broke all barriers and started practicing when she was in the ninth grade. Marzan won a gold medal in the singles event at the 2019 South Asian Games. She also secured two bronze medals in the 28th National Karate Championship in Bangladesh and two silver medals in the 9th

Bangabandhu Bangladesh Games. She has participated in competitions in Dubai, India, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

Despite all her success, she is no stranger to failures and obstacles. "In the pursuit of karate, I have faced many challenges, most of which stemmed from people passing negative comments behind my back. I never felt

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comfortable going out in my uniform because people in our country are conservative. It is beyond their belief that a girl from a reputed school like Viharunnisa would want to 'throw her life away' by engaging in martial arts," shared Marzan.

Now, she is a Fine Arts student at Jagannath University. Even though balancing her studies and karate

practices is taxing on her both mentally and physically, she still perseveres with all her might. "Fortunately, my teachers are very supportive. If I miss any class or test because of a game, they let me take it on a later date," she said.

Her next goal is to participate in the Asian Karate Championship and World Karate Federation. "Even if I don't win at those competitions, I think I will learn many important lessons from international coaches and players. I am just a simple girl from a small town, who managed to come this far," she added. "If our girls are given proper guidance, imagine what else they can do. I believe Bangladesh can also earn a world ranking in karate."

Regardless of the hurdles that come her way, Marzan carries on with her willpower and determination.

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YOUTH IN ACTION DYDF strives for a more inclusive world

LABIBA ANJUMI KABIR

Dhrubotara Youth Development Foundation (DYDF) focuses on training young people on leadership, eradicating poverty, and creating livelihoods through small loans and employment. The foundation was established in 2000.

After completing his primary education from Noakhali, Amiya Prapan Chakraborty pursued Development Studies from Dhaka University. Shocked by a rape and murder incident in Noakhali, Amiya, along with three of his friends, set out to build a platform that speaks against child abuse and harassment.

"When I approached my grandmother Komol Chakraborty, a freedom fighter herself, she encouraged the idea and named the initiative 'Dhrubotara' in line with the thought that back when compasses were not invented, sailors would rely on stars to lead their way in the sea," he shared.

"Since we started out, we have been working on empowering the youth and building a better Bangladesh through various social activities."



DYDF has been working on empowering the youth and building a better Bangladesh through various social activities since their establishment in 2000. PHOTO: COURTESY OF DYDF

With their pool of 48,000 volunteers, DYDF has expanded their activities across 44 districts and reached about half a million people.

The foundation works for marginal people and minority rights, centering rural and urban youth, tea labour, ethnic and disadvantaged community groups. They have

also formulated youth parliaments in districts, enabling people aged between 18 and 35 to pitch ideas on policy making. Besides, DYDF has arranged freelancing projects for char community students.

Among other achievements, the organisation received the Queen's Young Leader Award in 2017, and the Joy Bangla Youth Award in 2022.

DYDF carries out skill development projects, with an objective to train young people to be self-sufficient. Later, the foundation links the trainees up with various stakeholders.

Currently, DYDF is working on a project called "Onneshon" with Santal people around Chapainavabganj, which is supported by the ICT Division.

DYDF also works on climate development around coastal areas, including Noakhali. They have held different entrepreneurship summits for youth activists, administrators, policy makers and development organisations.

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NURTURING DREAMS

Books to accompany you along the road

AKHLAKUR RAHMAN

BoiBondhu started out in 2018 with an objective to promote reading. The organisation has built small libraries inside buses and hospitals, among other public places.

"People spend a good chunk of their time just sitting in public buses," says Mohiuddin Toha, Founder and Chief Coordinator of BoiBondhu. "We thought they could use this time productively by reading a book."

He founded BoiBondhu along with his friends Rashib Ahmed, Mahmudul Hasan Tuhin, and Eraz Imran.

"We started out with a box of 40 different books for a VIP 27 bus," he shares. "We took a loan to build seven more boxes, and have them installed inside other buses."

BoiBondhu was initiated with 100 books from private collections, which has now expanded to thousands of books stored in libraries in various buses and hospitals.

The organisation now has a library at Infertility Care and Research Centre in Mohammadpur, and another one in Kamalapur for the transgender community. They recently were permitted to build libraries at train stations as well, and are in talks with the naval authorities to set up libraries inside ships.

BoiBondhu is currently active in Panchagarh, Brahmanbaria, Chattogram, Sylhet, and Dhaka, with

over 300 volunteers.

They also organise a book festival annually, where readers can exchange their old books with new ones. BoiBondhu displays close to 5,000 books at the festival. "We have already exchanged over 15,000 books. This is inspiring, as many underprivileged kids come by for the books," says Mohiuddin.

Till now, the founder and his friends have been bearing the costs for these activities from their own pockets.

Furthermore, BoiBondhu intends to set up route libraries in rural parts

A small library by BoiBondhu at Dhaka's Lalmatia Park.



of Bangladesh for readers in remote villages. "Our volunteers who live in remote areas will be managing the books in these libraries," shares Mohiuddin.

Books will be placed on both sides of a route for locals, who can take any book at home for seven days to read.

"We have also set up BoiBondhu Shoshikhar Pathshala in villages, in which experts from various fields hold classes and share their experiences. We have already conducted six classes in different villages," concludes Mohiuddin.

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PHOTOS: COURTESY OF BOIBONDHU

Kids at the BoiBondhu Book Exchange Festival 2021.

GUIDES

Setting up your ideal study space

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

If you are going to be studying at home, taking the time to set up your study space properly is invaluable. It can help you stay organised, create positive associations with study and increase your productivity.

The perfect study area will look different for everyone, but there are key elements you should consider.

Ensure proper lighting

Try to set up your study space near a window if possible to maximise natural lighting. If you cannot set that up, a table lamp fitted with a white LED bulb might be a good option. It is equally important to position the light source carefully.

Personalise your space

Only you can know what inspires and motivates your productivity. Get a little creative, and make it a space that you actually want to spend time in. Having plants in your house can help reduce stress and anxiety, and can help spruce your study area. Keep your favourite candles to be surrounded by nice aromas while studying.

Keep things handy

Have all your study materials and stationery readily accessible – notebooks, pens,

highlighters, post-it notes, and whatever else you might need. Use storage solutions like folders to sort out any paper piles on your desk, and stationery organisers to hold any loose items. Get

a small clock to keep track of time and a calendar to note down deadlines and mark important dates. Always keep a water bottle on your desk to stay hydrated.

Minimise distractions
Set yourself some ground rules, like keeping your phone on silent mode and not checking

personal emails or social media during study time. Make sure you have a set routine to stick to, with key tasks and breaks scheduled in. Listen to an instrumental playlist if you're the type of person who needs music to study.

Create a positive corner

Stick up photos, motivational quotes, goal lists, and images on a pinboard to keep yourself motivated. Whether it is your favourite movie or travel destination, posters can help create pleasant associations with your study space.

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

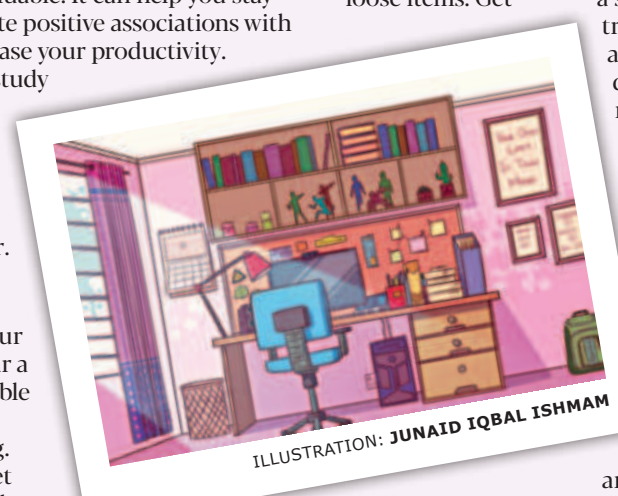


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