



Awardees and special guests at “Nibedita Women Summit 2019”.

YOUTH IN ACTION

NIBEDITA

A guiding light for women’s empowerment

Nibedita organised numerous training programmes on soft skills, CV writing, trade licensing, and business loans, free of cost for women.



Anika Islam.
PHOTOS: COURTESY

SHARMIN JOYA

Nibedita is a non-profit organisation founded by Anika Islam in 2018, which aims for women empowerment. It provides free training for women in digital marketing skills, entrepreneurship, lifestyle modification, and career placement. “As I began my undergraduate education, I was also working at Robi as a customer apprentice in 2012. I wanted to be financially independent,” shares Anika. “My father was unaware of this, since he wanted me to focus on my education only.” She has completed her MBA degree. She is also an influencer who endorses many renowned brands professionally. Nibedita started out with 100 women, and soon, the community began to grow.

Currently, it has 36,000 active female members, moderated by students voluntarily. “Our focus is to empower women and bring equality and equity amongst them,” says Anika. “It has not been an easy road for me. I faced a lot of criticism, predominantly from women, who tried to break my confidence at different levels.” Nibedita organised numerous training programmes on soft skills, CV writing, trade licensing, and business loans, free of cost for women. In partnership with BCC, the ICT Division and LIC, Nibedita provided free certification courses from Coursera. “During the pandemic a lot of women reached out to me asking for ideas on how they can build a start-up and develop their skills,” says Anika. “Some participants completed up to 70 courses.” Nibedita worked on the Idea Project by the ICT Division, and it has formed a collaboration with Hi-Tech Park for three years. The Nibedita Women Summit 2019

was organised in association with Daraz, Brac Bank, and UNB. It was Nibedita’s first official, largescale event. Commemorating Women’s Day and Women’s History Month, “Nibedita Equalizer 2022” will be held today at Radisson Blu Dhaka Water Garden with the tagline, “break the biasness”. In association with Digital Bangladesh, Hi-Tech Park, ICT Division, and The Daily Star, the event will honour 10 young influential women from different sectors. Among other things, “Nibedita Equalizer 2022” will feature sessions on mental health and emotional intelligence, marketing and communication impacts on business, inclusivity and leadership, focusing on breaking the biasness, following by a cultural programme. The author is a Reporter, Arts & Entertainment, The Daily Star. Email: sharmin@thedailystar.net.

NURTURING DREAMS

Paving the way for women in STEM

SHANIZ CHOWDHURY

Sidratul Moontaha is one of the recipients of the 2021 Diana Award. At the age of 22, she became the youngest Chapter Ambassador for Technovation. Founded in the United States, it is the largest and longest-running non-profit organisation for global technology education. It offers interactive learning programmes for young women. “I learned about Technovation when I was a community manager at an NGO. Being a strong advocate for women and girls in STEM, I emailed them about my intention to be Bangladesh’s Chapter Ambassador. At first, they said I was too young, but after a year of mentorship training, I was handed the responsibility in August 2020,” shared Sidratul. She initiated a programme for young women that combines both technology and entrepreneurship. “I relied on Facebook and word-of-mouth to reach out to people during the pandemic. At first, I didn’t have many members, but now people from almost nine cities have joined,” said Sidratul. In the first season, all teams made it to the quarterfinals of the Technovation challenge. The apps they built tackle issues related to climate change, promote skill development, and encourage loan lending, among other things. Sidratul is also the CEO of her own EdTech company, Youthentic++, which she launched in 2020. They teach programming and AI to young individuals. Each workshop only costs \$1. They offer both free and paid programmes to over 800 students every month. Moreover, she is the first Bangladeshi to receive the SheInspires 2021 Award under ‘Global Rising Star’ Category, which celebrates the huge wealth of remarkable contributions by women. “Million STEM”, a network amplifying the voices of women in STEM featured Sidratul as a role model for young women in London. She was also invited to the Future Leaders Invitation Programme in Paris by the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. The Programme enables individuals from the political, academic, and economic landscapes to gain an enhanced knowledge of France in all its glory. “Currently, I am leading the international project, ‘Mangrove Conservation with Artificial Intelligence in Bangladesh’. An AI model will be trained using on-ground data and satellite image data to identify areas of Sundarbans, where restoration is possible. Next year, I hope to pursue a PhD in AI,” concluded Sidratul. The author is a student of BRAC University, and a freelance journalist. Email: shanzaychowdhury@gmail.com.



Sidratul Moontaha, the youngest Chapter Ambassador for Technovation, is one of the recipients of the 2021 Diana Award.
PHOTO: NAYEM SHAAN

GUIDES

5 interesting platforms to learn about history



COLLAGE: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

SHANIZ CHOWDHURY

As we celebrate Women’s History Month, you might be fumbling in the dark trying to grasp the what, why and how of events. The following interactive and resourceful platforms retell historical events in an enjoyable and interesting way that is palatable to everyone. **HISTORY EXTRA** The official website for BBC History Magazine and BBC History Revealed, this platform brings a chock full of history at your fingertips. There are comprehensive articles and masterclasses that get to the bottom of many historical facts and events. The site also produces a history podcast, but the most interesting section is their Historical Quizzes, which puts your history knowledge to the test.

HISTORY TEA TIME WITH LINDSAY HOLIDAY Lindsay’s YouTube channel has almost 400 mini history documentaries that uncover stories of royals, women and other fascinating but lesser-known topics. Videos like “Women of the Titanic” and “Hürrem Sultan, Ottoman Empress” make you realise that contemporary culture teaches us about the tragedy of the sinking of the Titanic and the magnificent Sultan Suleiman, but not much is said about the women involved. **YOU’RE DEAD TO ME** Podcasts in popular vernacular have proved to be a valuable investment of time. The host of “You’re Dead To Me”, Greg Jenner discovers the hidden side of famous people and inventions. Along with the best names in comedy and history, each episode features layer upon

layer of anecdotes, jaw-dropping facts and little nuggets of wisdom. **SUIBHNE** From bite-sized videos to long-form ones, Suibhne chronicles many countries’ history. The minimalistic yet detailed animation makes it easy to follow through with the stories. If you consider reading to be a chore, visit this YouTube channel for enlightening crash courses. **THE PEOPLE HISTORY** This website organises all salient historical narratives from the 1800s to as recent as 2013 under one umbrella. “This Day in History” is a section that reveals astonishingly rich trivia about the past. You can also take a look at what was trending in fashion and music, food prices, and evolution of several sports across different eras.

INTERVIEW

Learning through play

ZAREEN NAWAR

Amir Hamza is the founder of Here We Play, a platform that promotes play as earnestly as schooling in the process and progression of teaching students at different levels of education. He also founded the start-up Makeateam, which facilitates activities, through interactive learning sessions and games, for corporations, students, and professionals from different sectors. Amir is one of the entrepreneurs in the Dhaka Hub Global Shapers 2021 Cohort. The Global Shapers are a community of young leaders and changemakers aged between 20 and 30, curated by the World Economic Forum. The Dhaka Hub was founded in 2014. In an interview with Star Youth, The Daily Star, Amir talks extensively about the impact his initiatives have been deriving. **How did you come up with the ideas for Here We Play and Makeateam?** While working for Teach For Bangladesh, I noticed that most students were not enjoying the process of learning. I realised that my best childhood memories were made during playtime with my friends. After putting much thought into encouraging students to enjoy learning, I came up with the idea of Here We Play over two years ago. With Makeateam, we facilitate team-building activities through interactive learning sessions and games. Anyone can join any of the sessions offered for personal and professional growth. **What were some of your biggest challenges along the way?** Having to convince teachers and principals about the importance of play alongside teaching was a challenge. Here We Play makes play complementary to education, and not just a brief supplement. Thankfully, we were invited to institutions to make play more accessible for students, instead of us having to approach them. That being said, many of our plans need funding in order to take off. **What are some notable projects of your platforms?** We have been working with teachers to enhance the pedagogy of play through classroom materials. I designed games for implementation in virtual mediums such as



Amir Hamza.
PHOTO: COURTESY

Zoom and Google Meet, for students. They have been learning maths and art through gamified training knowledge. Recently, we launched a plant-based ID card making system to replace voluntary plastic cards people have to use during temporary conferences and other such programmes. The idea is to make the ID cards with paper and fill the inside of them with seeds so once they are thrown into landfills, they will help grow plants. **What are your future plans in this field?** I would like to ask for help from the government to implement virtual medium play and game-based learning in classes — this method could be introduced in the official curriculum. The data of the impacts can be sent to government bodies through Dhaka Hub. I hope to create games for Bangladesh, Nepal and India. The author is a freelance journalist. Email: nawarzareen@gmail.com