



Rehnumah at the Blue Pearl of Morocco.



Rehnumah enjoys breakfast at Alcione Residence, Positano.

NURTURING DREAMS

# The globetrotter who broke barriers

**Rehnumah often comes across questions about when she plans to ‘settle down’ or how she affords to travel so much. “I have no problem answering these queries as most of the time, they come with good intentions, but I am sure male travellers do not have to face such questions,” she added.**

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Rehnumah Insan, a travel blogger and lawyer, has visited 40 countries till date. Currently, she is working as a manager in the UK Civil Service, dealing with legal and policy implications for post Covid-19 business transitions.

As her parents are keen travellers, she grew up going through their albums, looking at the beautiful places they visited, and listening to stories about different cultures.

Rehnumah started travelling after getting into university, whereby she discovered her passion for photography and writing. She started blogging with her trip to Italy around five years ago, and has never looked back since then.

Her photo album, “Around the world with my hijab”, created quite a stir among travel enthusiasts across the world, and is still trending on various social media platforms. “It dawned upon me that girls find it daunting to step out of their comfort zones in hijabs,” she shared. Through this album, she has beautifully portrayed how girls can travel around the world, while maintaining their religion and culture.

While Rehnumah has been fortunate enough to have a supportive family, she often comes across questions about when she plans to ‘settle down’ or how she affords to travel so much. “I have no problem answering these queries as most of the time, they



Rehnumah Insan.

PHOTOS: COURTESY

come with good intentions, but I am sure male travellers do not have to face such questions,” she added.

Travelling has given her the opportunity to meet new people and eliminate misconceptions that people have about

South Asian women. “I recently visited South Italy where I met a woman who recognised me from Instagram. She kept asking me about my life, and I was more than happy to share my background as a British-Bangladeshi. I am very rooted to my culture,” she recalled.

Rehnumah also uses social media (@the\_travellette) to bust myths related to travelling alone. “In a world where women are capable of achieving so much, it is disappointing to see that people think we need to rely on someone else’s bank account to travel,” she said.

When travelling alone, Rehnumah carries a small tripod or simply asks others to take her photos. “If you are married, people assume that you must always be travelling with your husband. Couples lead different lives and have different jobs. We simply cannot take each other on every trip,” she added.

Moving forward, she wishes to explore more underrated places and luxury hotels around the world.

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

INTERVIEW

## Harnessing data analytics for social good

SHANIZ CHOWDHURY

Working first-hand with the Health Ministry and icddr, Shayan Chowdhury led data analysis projects that traced the Covid-19 outbreak, hospitalisations, deaths, and mobility to inform actionable policy for lockdowns, public health communications, and healthcare decisions.

He is also the Co-founder of Reach4Help, a non-profit organisation that facilitates volunteer help worldwide. For his humanitarian work, he has earned a place 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 The Daily Star, Shayan discussed his experiences in data analytics, and more.

**What does your work as a data analyst entail?**

I interpret large data sets to determine pain points for exercising policies and the effectiveness of crisis intervention strategies. We worked with Grameenphone and Robi to track locations of people who tested positive for Covid-19 so we could predict which areas the virus will be spreading to.

**You are a research assistant at Columbia University. What are you currently working on?**

I am working on a novel approach to monitor fetal well-being using electrocardiogram (ECG) signals. We use data analytics and machine learning models to detect stress and anxiety patterns in pregnant women.

**Tell us about Reach4Help.**

It is an open source software development initiative that gives people better and quicker access to resources, and allows organisations to control risks and therefore, be more resilient. We are working with data streams to connect NGOs with displaced Ukrainian refugees so they can be provided with food and shelter, among other resources.

**What inspired you to get into this field?**

Growing up, I did not have the popular video game Minecraft, so I thought if I cannot play it, why do not I develop a game from scratch? I taught myself how to code and it opened up a whole avenue of possibilities for me. I garnered experiences through an internship at the NY Genome Center, then I also worked with Nobel Laureate Joachim Frank’s lab at Columbia University and completed a mentorship at Google.

**How has being a part of Dhaka Hub enriched your experience?**

It gives me immense pleasure that I can represent Bangladesh on a global platform. I was incredibly inspired by the brilliant insights of the entrepreneurs, community leaders and designers I met through Dhaka Hub.

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

EVENT

## UIU National Job Festival concludes



Moinuddin Hasan Rashed, Chairman and Managing Director, United Group Ltd, attended the closing ceremony as the chief guest.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF UIU

AKHLAKUR RAHMAN

The UIU National Job Festival 2022, a two-day event organised by United International University (UIU), concluded on March 14. The closing ceremony of the fair was held at the UIU auditorium.

Moinuddin Hasan Rashed, Chairman and Managing Director, United Group Ltd, attended the ceremony as the chief guest. Md Arfan Ali, President and Managing Director, Bank Asia, and Emranul Huq, Managing Director and CEO, Dhaka Bank, among many others, were also present at the event.

“Honesty, sincerity and hard work, these three are the key to a successful career,” said Arfan Ali. “There are no shortcuts in life. Be sincere towards your organisation and I invite you all to work for us at Bank Asia.”

“This is the first job festival after two years of Covid-19 restrictions,” said Moinuddin Hasan Rashed. “The fair

will play an important role in building relationships between academics and industries as well as assisting job seekers.”

“120 companies conducted spot Interviews, screenings, and recruitment sessions in our fair,” said the Vice Chancellor of UIU Prof Dr Chowdhury Mofizur Rahman. “Nearly 20,000 candidates attended the fair just from UIU and I would love to know ratio of students who got jobs from the fair.”

United Group, Pakiza Technovation Ltd, Bank Asia, Pragati Insurance Ltd, BKash, Dhaka Bank Ltd, Prime Bank Ltd, Banglalink, Uttara Motors Ltd., Arla Foods Bangladesh Ltd, ACI Ltd, BRAC, Navana Group, and many other enterprises conducted recruitment sessions at the event.

Towards the end of the ceremony, the chief guest and the Vice Chancellor of UIU handed out crests to all participating companies.

YOUTH IN ACTION

# Empowering communities with menstrual hygiene management

USRAAT FAHMIDAH

Shuchita aims to make resources for menstrual hygiene management accessible to women in marginalised communities of Bangladesh through different campaigns. Since their inception in 2020, the initiative has completed 13 workshops across the country.

“It started in Satkhira when a lady requested sanitary pads because there was no access to clean sanitation in her village. It occurred to me that we did not consider something basic like hygiene packs as a necessity in our relief goods until then. We went with relief goods to the Amphan stricken village, but not with sanitary pads,” explained Fatiha Polin, an Acumen fellow and CEO of Shuchita.

“I have always worked with people and for people. Her words stayed with me, and I wanted to come up with a sustainable solution.”

She believes menstrual health should not be inaccessible to underprivileged communities. Polin, who is also an architect at PERCEIVE, the mother organisation of Shuchita, has been involved with Covid-19 relief work from the start of the pandemic.

Menstrual health is a crucial issue in different parts of Bangladesh due to affordability and inaccessibility to proper sanitation and clean water. “Even if we provided sanitary pads, people might not know how to use them or dispose of them in rivers. We wanted to teach people safe menstruation practices,” Polin explained.



PHOTOS: COURTESY

**Since their inception in 2020, Shuchita has completed 13 workshops on menstrual hygiene management across the country.**

Upon returning to Dhaka, she researched and developed Shuchita’s own reusable sanitary pads within months after finding the available market options unsatisfactory. The result was 400 reusable sanitary pads in the first batch, all of which were distributed in Satkhira.

Now, Shuchita has three production hubs in Dhaka, Khagrachari, and Dinajpur. Polin explained that they equip women with different, necessary life skills. “We want underprivileged women to earn incomes so

they can be self-reliant. We want them to feel benefited from our workshops,” she added.

Their workshops cover everything from safe menstrual practices and skill training to producing reusable pads. With a network of over 65 volunteers, Shuchita has conducted workshops in Rohingya camps too.

Moving forward, Polin hopes to reach out to 32 districts of Bangladesh through her efforts.

“Funding and resource mobilisation is a major issue. But so far, the response we have gotten from the communities has helped us,” she concluded.

**The author is a freelance journalist.**