

# With Monash and UCB, the keyword is “partnership”

SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM

In conversation with Andrew Walker, Pro Vice-Chancellor and President of Monash University Malaysia, about the quality of higher education, opportunities of Bangladeshi students to pursue higher education abroad and also the impact of the pandemic on exploring the opportunities.

Professor Walker recently visited Bangladesh and talked about the Monash University partnership program for prospective Bangladeshi students through Universal College Bangladesh (UCB), who provide two different paths – the Monash University Foundation course, which is an equivalent to the 12th grade of school, and the Monash College Diploma, which is an equivalent to the first year in Monash University.

the sectors of the economy here in Bangladesh, where they will be dealing with people across boundaries, learn about other cultures, languages, and systems.

When you study in a global university like Monash, you are exposed to that from day one. You are learning in a diverse, international, global environment from a university that has got campuses in a number of different countries, so, you are preparing the graduates for the future global workforce of Bangladesh.

Since Monash has been operating in Bangladesh through UCB for the past year, in your perspective, what are the prospects for Bangladeshi students through this program?

I think it is a wonderful opportunity for Monash to work with a fantastic local partner like UCB, to set up a pathway to higher education for students here in Bangladesh.

we see.

A lot of people in the Asian region seem to be feeling they want to study a bit closer to home, and that's one of the real advantages of Monash. Not only do we have a pathway partner right here in Bangladesh, but we also have a major campus nearby in Malaysia. So, we are seeing a lot of interest from students in Bangladesh and other parts of this region, coming to study with us in Monash in Malaysia. It is nearby, it is culturally familiar with familiar food, and is religiously familiar as well. It feels like a safe and secure option.

The other thing the Covid-19 crisis has taught us is that we can work flexibly with students wherever they are, no matter what emerges. At Monash University, we have not missed out on anything as a result of the pandemic. We have continued educating and graduating our students. Students have been working with us online, they are now coming back to campus.

But who knows what the future holds? However, I think Monash has been able to demonstrate that we will maintain the continuity of our students' education regardless of what happens.

According to you, what roles do institutes like UCB play in establishing quality education and creating a pathway for students through this program? What values do you think they provide to their students?

The keyword here is partnership. When you are a big global institution like Monash University, you need really good local partners. Being global is not about being the same everywhere, Monash is a powerful and strong university, but when we get involved in individual countries, we want to really relate respectfully and meaningfully with local culture, local experiences, local knowledge, and local values.

That can be done with partners like UCB, where we have people who understand both the Monash system, the local education system, and the needs and aspirations of students here. I think UCB really combines and springs together the themes that I have been talking about. It really combines the local and the global. And that is the combination that graduates are going to need in the future workforce.

Therefore, what I think they are bringing to this wonderful formula, is that real understanding of local and global, and opening those pathways and forms a wonderful bridge during the transition to university, because the transition to global curriculum from a local is often difficult. What we have here is a very careful guided pathway where they are introduced to learning in a gradual and gentle way.

So, when they move into university, they are much better prepared because university learning is different from school learning. And to have this bridge is a really valuable asset.

Syeda Afrin Tarannum is sub editor of SHOUT, The Daily Star.



## Youth from Jhenaidah opens a free gym

AZIBOR RAHMAN

What started out as a simple hobby, eventually resulted in the formation of a gymnasium in Sreepur village under the Shaillkupa upazila in Jhenaidah. Youth from the nearby villages are congregating to this gym, that was made by a member of the youth in Jhenaidah.

This correspondent spoke to the person in question, AP Palash – son of Abdul Aziz of Sreepur village in the district. He passed his honours and masters in Management from KC college, Jhenaidah in 2021. At present Palash's main source of income involves outsourcing work from online and investments in making gym materials. He lives in a remote village which is 15 kilometres away from upazila headquarters.

Palash explained that he gets immense pleasure when the local youths come to his gym. He opened his gym in June of 2020. Using materials such as bricks, cement and sand, he built all of his gym equipment such as barbell, dumbbell, resistance bands, pull up bars, and many more. Besides this, he also uses old tyres and plastic bottle as gym equipment.

The 26-year-old Palash noted that he weighed around 92 kgs when he initially started the gym. Now, after tirelessly working in the gym, he weighs 68 kgs. Seeing Palash's transformation, local youth from Borda, Sreepur, Mohammadpur and Anipur of Shaillkupa upazila started to join Palash's gym free of cost.

Md Kanchan Hossain, a second-year HSC candidate from Sreepur village told The Daily Star that after joining the gym, he lost around 10 kgs of weight, dropping to 65 kgs. He also noted that this gym is a great initiative, as it is free of any charges.

Another student Tuhin Hasan, a second-year honours student said, "I was only 52 kgs, which is not ideal for my height. I needed to bulk up, so I joined the gym. Now, after one year I weigh around 62 kgs. I come here every day in the afternoon, and work out for an hour."

Sports lover and teacher Shahidul Islam of Alamdanga Government Primary School told The Daily Star that Palash was a very good student. Through this initiative, Palash has enabled members of the youth to go to a gym without incurring a burden on their pockets. Shahidul also noted that he also goes to Palash's gym.

UP Chairman Feroz Hossain told us that he had heard about the noble initiative taken by Palash, and that he was happy to hear about it. Jhenaidah district sports officer, Mahbubur Rahman said that while he was not previously aware of Palash, he will do his best to support Palash's initiative.



Professor Andrew Walker

Given your experience as an educator, why do you think a prospective Bangladeshi student should consider higher education in an institution that follows a global curriculum?

The future of the economy of Bangladesh, like so many other parts of the world, is global. Bangladesh is a rapidly growing economy with great potential for future growth, and so much of that is going to depend on the relationship with the global economy. And so, to prepare students, and to prepare graduates who can effectively operate in that global economy, is a high priority.

However, by the global economy I do not mean that students or graduates going overseas to work. I mean them working in all

Students around the world exploring different ways to attain access to higher education may find it difficult because at times it can seem very remote, inaccessible, expensive, and even a long way away.

Now, they have a doorway to a first-class global degree, right here at the heart of Dhaka, through our partner UCB.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many students could not follow through with their plans to go for higher education abroad. What options do they have in terms of current circumstances?

Covid-19 has certainly made people reassess the directions they want to take with education, and I think there are two key things

# Hate Khori strives to facilitate education for fishermen community

AKHLAKUR RAHMAN

Rubel Mia, a local youth from Mathbaria, Pirojpur founded Hate Khori Foundation back in 2018, with the intention of providing proper education for the financially challenged children of fishermen in his community.

The organisation provides financial aid to the children of fishermen which includes funding for education, educational material and free classes. Alongside this, Hate Khori also strives to raise awareness about education in the local communities.

"In our Mathbaria community there are many families of fishermen who cannot send their children to school due to their financial situation," shared Rubel, adding, "Many of these families are not even aware of the significance of education in their children's lives. Hate Khori Foundation intends to change that."

In the beginning, Rubel Mia and along with the members of his Foundation went from door to door, trying to raise awareness about education. They also provided counselling to the families of fishermen about the type of opportunities that education can provide for their children.

"The normal scenario for these children, would be that they would become fishermen and start working on the fishing boats after a certain age," says Rubel. "Education for



them was too expensive, and would not immediately contribute to the survival of their family. So, traditional education was simply a dream for them."

Back in 2018, Rubel Mia inaugurated the FreeFriday School, where children from the fishermen community could attend free classes on the weekend.

"At present, we have around a hundred members in our foundation, who are tirelessly working to help these children in the school, and at our library," smiled Rubel. "We aim to build a proper educational foundation for these children so that they can participate in the same activities that their peers are engaged in. We want to ensure that they can

pursue their education, and that they are not left behind due to a lack of financial support."

"Keeping up with the modern world is not easy for these children, but it is necessary," stated Rubel.

To ensure that the children are developing properly in terms of academic knowledge, social skills, mental health, and physical health,

Hate Khori Foundation arranges an 'Anando Mela' and a Digital Science Fair amongst other events every year.

Rubel and his Hate Khori Foundation members have always approached their work with a sense of responsibility, regardless of the obstacles they encountered.

"At first, we faced countless criticism from our society, with many parents showing a level of mistrust in regards to our intentions. Some even said that we were wasting our time trying to do this," said Rubel. "Moreover, stagnant funding remains a major problem for us. Currently, most of our project funding comes from our own pockets, with a few small donations being provided by some of our well-wishers."

"Though our journey till now has not been smooth, we have never lost hope in our initiative and have continued to work towards our goals," shared Shojib Mia, a founding member of Hate Khori Foundation.

Hate Khori Foundation's FreeFriday School has already gathered fifty regular students, who attend classes every weekend. The initiative is already expanding at a rapid pace, as their awareness raising activities has proved to have a positive impact.

"Currently, our primary focus is to turn our school into a government-recognised educational institution, thereby ensuring a bright future for these children," concluded Rubel Mia.

“Though our journey till now has not been smooth, we have never lost hope in our initiative and have continued to work towards our goals,”

SHOJIB MIA  
a founding member  
of Hate Khori  
Foundation.