

## THE DAILY STAR ICT AWARDS 2022

Bangladesh has made great strides in the ICT sector in the last two decades thanks to the exponential growth achieved by the country's IT professionals and entrepreneurs riding on the favourable policy support. Now, nearly 2,000 IT firms and thousands of youths and IT experts are engaged in the sector to cater for local and international markets through their innovations, creativity and excellence. To raise awareness about the role of ICT in nation building and to encourage innovation and excellence among ICT talents and enterprises, The Daily Star has been recognising and celebrating extraordinary achievements by IT entrepreneurs since 2016. This year, six trailblazers in the ICT sector were honoured with The Daily Star ICT Awards 2022 for their works in the sector and their contribution to the development of country's IT sector and the society.



**Sadia Haque, CEO and co-founder of ShareTrip Limited**

**DIGITAL COMMERCE OF THE YEAR 2022**  
Winner: ShareTrip Limited

Anyone planning to go for a trip looks for the best packages to explore the best destinations. ShareTrip is there to help travellers.

The online travel aggregator provides travel services through its dynamic app that allows a traveller to book flights, hotels and find suitable holiday packages around the globe.

ShareTrip has a business to business portal to serve the business travel segment.

The online platform claims to occupy 12 percent of the entire travel market.

Backed by state-owned venture Startup Bangladesh, ShareTrip is expected to grow by 2.5 times by the end of next year.

In 2014, the company started its journey as Travel Booking Bangladesh (TBBB).

In 2019, it officially rebranded TBBB to ShareTrip as an end-to-end tech-based travel solution provider.

ShareTrip has grown from a small company of three people to employing 180 plus people in Dhaka and all across the country.

The company currently has more than 24 lakh users.



**Hosne Ara Jasmine, senior vice president of BJIT Group**

**ICT SOLUTION PROVIDER OF THE YEAR 2022 (INTERNATIONAL MARKET FOCUS)**  
Winner: BJIT Group

BJIT Limited began its journey in 2001 as a software solution provider founded by JM Shwakat Akbar, who moved to Japan in his early 20s after getting a scholarship.

BJIT is an award-winning global IT company offering high-end IT solutions, including outsourcing, remote development, and 360 degree project management.

BJIT has 750+ skilled engineers and operating in 7 global offices located in Japan, Finland, Singapore, The USA, Sweden, Bangladesh and The Netherlands.

BJIT has worked on more than 2,000 projects, including artificial intelligence, fintech, blockchain, mechanical design and other customised services.

The company is currently working with renowned organisations such as Sony, BMW, Qualcomm, Kyocera and NTT Docomo.

BJIT continues its successful journey in providing high-quality services to the global IT industry and providing employment to hundreds of national graduates.

Leading American IT review platform Clutch gave BJIT a 5-star rating for its outstanding performance in delivering quality offshore software products across the globe.



**Azmal Haque Azim, director of Digicon Technologies Limited**

**ICT SOLUTION PROVIDER OF THE YEAR 2022 (LOCAL MARKET FOCUS)**  
Winner: Digicon Technologies Limited

Digicon Technologies Ltd, an outsourcing organisation, has been working for more than 11 years in Bangladesh.

One of the leading business process outsourcing companies of Bangladesh, Digicon extends various services, including customer interaction services, back office services, skill development trainings and IT solutions.

It serves various public and private sector organisations in the fields of consumer electronics, banking and finance, healthcare, telecommunication utility and automobiles.

The company provided services for operations management of Dhaka-Chattogram highway's digital monitoring system, national emergency services, contact centre services of the land ministry, Sonali Bank, the Directorate General of Family Planning and Bangladesh Power Development Board.

The company is also the recipient of the Grameenphone's "The Service Excellence Award 2020".



**Fahad Ifaz, co-founder and CEO of iFarmer,**

**ICT STARTUP OF THE YEAR 2022**  
Winner: iFarmer

iFarmer is a full-stack agriculture platform that is a one-stop solution for small holder farmers.

It facilitates retail and institutional funders to finance the farmers and enables them to access quality agri-inputs through partnerships with agri-input companies and retailers.

It also works to create better market access for the farmers by aggregating products from the farmers and selling them to institutional buyers, retailers, and wholesale markets.

Since its inception in January 2019, the company has facilitated 2.6 crore of smallholder farmers in Bangladesh.

iFarmer raised \$2.1 million in equity investment and secured a fund of \$500,000 from the United Nations.

iFarmer's revenue rose to \$47 million in 2022 from \$30,000 in 2019. It is now operating in 22 districts through a "Phygital" model.



**Late Luna Shamsuddoha**

**ICT PIONEER**  
Winner: Late Luna Shamsuddoha

Late Luna Shamsuddoha was a leading software entrepreneur of Bangladesh, who breathed her last in February 2021.

The brilliant businesswoman was the chairperson of leading IT and software company Dohatec New Media, which has been developing solutions for enterprise clients in North America, Asia and Europe for over 25 years.

Luna started Dohatec New Media in 1992 along with a core team of engineering academics and professionals.

The former director of Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services played an instrumental role along with Dohatec to create Bangladesh's digital public procurement platform.

Dohatec was also involved in the development of a voter enrolment solution in 2007-08.

The firm developed several e-governance projects and the electronic government procurement system that ensures transparency of government procurement.

She was also appointed as the first female chairperson of state-owned Janata Bank in 2018 as she had sound knowledge in finance and economics.



**Moynul Haque Siddiqui, chairman of Fiber@Home**

**ICT BUSINESS PERSON OF THE YEAR 2022**  
Winner: Moynul Haque Siddiqui, chairman, Fiber@Home

Prominent entrepreneur of ICT and textile sectors Moynul Haque Siddiqui completed his graduation from the business faculty of the Dhaka University in 1986.

He is founder director of Fiber@Home, a nationwide telecommunication transmission network operator that provides services to the telcos, cable television and internet service providers.

Siddiqui has been leading the Fiber@Home as managing director and chairman since 2009.

Apart from the Fiber@Home, he is also the founder of BDCOM Online Ltd, a company listed with Dhaka Stock Exchange and Chittagong Stock Exchange.

He also founded Norban Communications Ltd, an IT and telecom solutions provider.

He is a founder director of Asia Pacific General Insurance Company Limited, which is also a listed company.



"ICT has empowered us with improved communication and collaboration. Our productivity and efficiency in various industries have gone up."  
**Selim RF Hussain,**  
CEO and Managing Director,  
BRAC Bank Limited



"Globally, the most wonderful successes are now coming from the ICT and digital sector. ICT is also a great success story for Bangladesh and it could have been much greater."  
**Mahfuz Anam,**  
editor and publisher,  
The Daily Star



"A lot of initiatives were taken to develop the ICT sector but Bangladesh could not reach its destination."  
**Md Sabur Khan,**  
chairman, Daffodil  
International University



"Achieving IT export target of \$5 billion is challenging, but we will be able to pull off the target if local companies get adequate support."  
**Russell T Ahmed,**  
president, BASIS

## ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT Jerusalem attacks raise tensions

REUTERS, Jerusalem

The Israeli military was sending more troops into the occupied West Bank, a day after a Palestinian gunman shot dead seven people on the outskirts of Jerusalem and another shooting attack in the city yesterday wounded two people.

The attacks took place towards the end of a month of growing confrontation and follow an Israeli raid in the West Bank that killed nine Palestinians, including seven gunmen, and cross-border fire between Israel and Gaza.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's new cabinet, which includes hardline nationalist parties that have called for stronger action against Palestinians and oppose Palestinian statehood, was due to meet later yesterday.

Friday's attack outside a synagogue was the deadliest in the city area since 2008. The gunman, Khair Alkam, was a 21-year-old Palestinian resident of East Jerusalem, according to police.

Alkam's father told Reuters his son had no links to any Palestinian

militant groups. He struck in an area that Israel annexed to Jerusalem after the 1967 war, a move not recognised internationally.

Police said he had tried to flee by car but was chased by officers and shot dead. Forty-two suspects, including members of the gunman's family, had been arrested, police said.

Yesterday, police said a 13-year-old boy from East Jerusalem opened fire at a group of passers-by, wounding two people, before he was shot and wounded by one of them.

That incident took place around Silwan, a Palestinian neighbourhood in East Jerusalem that lies below the Old City walls.

The attacks underlined the potential for an escalation in violence after months of clashes in the West Bank culminating in a raid in Jenin on Thursday that killed at least nine Palestinians, the deadliest such raid in years.

"Following an IDF (Israeli Defence Forces) situational assessment, it was decided to reinforce the Judea and Samaria (West Bank) Division with an additional battalion," the military said.

## Tech trailblazers feted

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Banks will continue to invest in and expand their digital banking capabilities such as greater adoption of artificial intelligence and machine learning to improve customer service, become cost-efficient and detect and prevent fraud, Hussain added.

Bangladesh has the opportunity to revolutionise by deploying IT in areas of education, health and governance, said Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star.

"ICT is a great success story for Bangladesh, but it could have been a much bigger success story. You have done wonderful but it is not sufficient. You need to do more."

A lot of policies were made for the development of the IT sector but due to a lag in implementation, the results are not materialising.

"Now that we have the confidence, we need to work together for achieving the target of exporting IT products and services worth \$20 billion by 2031. We have the time and let us put our hearts and minds together to achieve the target," he added.

iFarmer facilitates retail and institutional funders to finance farmers, enables access to high-quality agri inputs through

partnerships with companies and retailers and creates better market access for farmers.

Fiber@Home built about 50,000km nationwide optical fibre-based transmission backbone, enabling a common connectivity platform for different service providers like mobile operators, cable TV operators and internet service providers.

Digicon Technologies is a leading outsourcing organisation in Bangladesh, with an industry-leading edge in the vertical of BPO and IT/ITES solutions.

BJIT Group has been successfully providing software solutions in the global market for more than 21 years. In 1992, when the people of Bangladesh knew little about computers and the internet, a woman and young entrepreneur Luna founded Dohatec New Media to provide software solution designs and development services to institutions, government agencies and corporations globally.

Luna's vision and indomitable appetite for technological advancement helped the company to grow as a leading software company in Bangladesh that has also attained worldwide glory.

## Quit now or there will be no escape

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without responding to any provocation.

"We have so far held our all programmes peacefully and we will ensure their fall through peaceful agitations."

Termining their march a silent protest against the government, he said they will force the government to quit with the people on their side.

Protesting price hikes of daily essentials, the BNP leader said, "Prices of rice, egg, lentils, salt and other essentials have been skyrocketing. Labourers and rickshaw-pullers are not being able to lead normal lives. The situation is so grave that if anyone protests [against price hikes], they get arrested."

Slamming the government for arresting opposition activists, he said it has turned the whole country into a prison.

The leaders and workers of the BNP and its different associate bodies were seen thronging different areas of Badda since noon to join the

programme.

Dhaka North BNP Convener Amanullah Aman and Member-Secretary Aminul Haque repeatedly asked the party workers to ensure traffic is not hampered.

However, the procession caused serious traffic jams on their route, causing public sufferings.

Many commuters were seen walking to their destinations due to long tailbacks.

Meanwhile, a huge number of law enforcers were deployed from Badda to Malibagh to maintain law and order and avoid any untoward incidents.

Earlier on Thursday, the BNP announced the four-day march in the capital on January 28, 30, 31 and February 1.

Dhaka North BNP will hold a march from Gabtoli to Mirpur-10 intersection on January 31, while the Dhaka South unit will march from Jatrabari to Shyampur on January 30 and from Mugda to Malibagh on February 1.

## It's a 'death march' for the BNP

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march programme, BNP leaders and activists on the same day marched from the capital's Shahjadpur to Malibagh to press home their 10-point demand, which includes holding the next general election under a nonpartisan caretaker government.

Quader said, "The BNP's alliance is a mess and their movement will never be successful. Where is their uproar? Where is their mass upsurge? ... Awami League's roots run deep. So, there's no point in daydreaming."

The AL leader went on to say that BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir was now only making "hollow remarks and spreading lies".

"We have been compelled to reply to their remarks," he said.

AL leaders and activists will continue to take to the streets and

respond to every "conspiracy", the party general secretary added.

Meanwhile, AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif said the next general election will be held as per the constitution.

If the BNP has trust in people, they should contest the election to test their popularity, he said.

"But the BNP will not join the election. Actually, the BNP-Jamaat doesn't want an election. They know it very well that the people will never vote them into power," he added.

Noting that AL is a party of the masses, Hanif said the party always stands by the people in their weal and woe.

The AL government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has been leading the country towards development and progress, he added.

## Reserve forest defiled, defying court order

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But in the 1980s, the plots were mistakenly recorded as khas land in the BS, they said.

Mozammel said the district administration could lease out the land because it was wrongly listed as khas land. A reserve forest cannot be leased out unless the president changes its status of being reserved.

"We have taken legal steps and filed cases to protect the forest," he said, "Now Halda Valley is ignoring the court order and destroying the wildlife habitat."

Since 2006, the department has filed at least 21 cases accusing Halda employees of encroachment, land grabbing, felling trees and assaulting

Forest Department officials, according to court documents.

To protect biodiversity, the Cabinet on October 31, 2022, approved a proposal to extend the ban on cutting trees in the country's reserved and natural forests to 2030.

Contacted, Halda Valley Managing Director Nader Khan said, "We have the legal aspects in mind. I don't think there was anything inappropriate about digging the land."

He avoided giving a direct answer when he was reminded about the status quo order, and simply said, "I have enough documents."

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of the Bangladesh

Environmental Lawyers Association, said, "Digging the land of a reserved forest is a crime. I believe the Forest Department should try harder to stop this."

Mohammad Kamal Hossain, former professor of the Institute of Forestry and Environmental Science at Chittagong University, said, "The government shouldn't have leased out the property. The Forest Department won't be able to save these historic woodlands if the administration doesn't play an active role."

Chattogram Deputy Commissioner Abul Bashar Mohammed Fakhruzzaman said whether or not the Forest Department has a legitimate claim

on the land will depend on the court decision.

When his attention was drawn to the ongoing excavation on the land, Fakhruzzaman said, "We have allocated the land to Halda Valley to plant tea sapling. Digging for a lake is illegal. I will look into the matter and take necessary action."

In a report submitted to a parliamentary body in February 2021, the Forest Department said over 1.60 lakh individuals and organisations grabbed 2.57 lakh acres of forestland across the country. Of the total grabbed land, 1.38 lakh acres of reserve forests were occupied by 88,215 individuals and organisations.