

8TH BRAC BANK-THE DAILY STAR ICT AWARDS



IQBAL AHMED FAKHRUL HASAN
Founder and CEO of Divine IT Ltd

ICT SOLUTIONS PROVIDER OF THE YEAR - LOCAL MARKET FOCUS

WINNER: DIVINE IT LTD

Divine IT is an IT solutions provider for government and business entities since its founding in 2005. Its flagship product is PrismERP, a locally developed software that is able to adapt to specific needs of its users. Its comprehensive system covers over 65 types of businesses, including government agencies. This system helps companies to store, capture and analyse data to improve efficiency. Divine IT also provides physical security, digital archiving, and cyber security, among other services. Divine IT's solutions have been implemented for over 400 clients across various sectors, such as RMG and textile, power and energy, aviation, banking, internet and data centres, etc. Some of Divine IT's notable clients include Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission, Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission, are Titas Gas, Chittagong Port Authority, among others. Divine IT has been a member of BASIS since 2008.



MOJAHEDUL HOQUE ABUL HASANAT
Chairman and chief technical officer of DSI

ICT SOLUTION PROVIDER OF THE YEAR - INTERNATIONAL MARKET FOCUS

WINNER: DYNAMIC SOLUTION INNOVATORS LIMITED (DSI)

Dynamic Solution Innovators Ltd (DSi) is a software development company serving its clients in Asia, England and the US since 2001. DSi specialises in creation of e-commerce platforms and offering integrated solutions for various industries. The wide array of services offered by DSi include QA (Quality Assurance) consulting and testing, which is an important part of any software development process; data science and machine learning, which studies data and how to extract meaning from it in addition to understand and extract data. DSi has worked with bKash, a leading mobile financial service, ODMS, a shipping container and cargo management system, and many more services. Major customers include DSi Unicef, a2i, UNDB, and the Bangladesh government. DSi has been a member of BASIS since 2008.



MORIN TALUKDER
Co-founder and CEO of Pickaboo.com

ICT DIGITAL COMMERCE OF THE YEAR

WINNER: PICKABOO.COM

Pickaboo is a leading online and offline e-commerce platform for mobile phones, gadgets and other electronics in Bangladesh. It was founded in 2016, offering various services like 100 percent authentic products, fast delivery, flexible payment options, among others. Pickaboo is also the provider of value-added services like temporary mobile replacement, EMI facilities with pre-booking facilities and exchange options. In 2020, Pickaboo successfully expanded its physical retail presence with 20 outlets across the country, and in the following years was on course to become the largest mobile and gadget-based retail chain in Bangladesh. Its customers also enjoy free pickup facilities if they pick up their orders from nearby Pickaboo outlets. Now Pickaboo has become a trusted e-commerce site for mobiles and gadgets, along with having both online and offline presence across Bangladesh.



TAWHIDA SHIROPA
Founder and CEO of Moner Bondhu

ICT STARTUP OF THE YEAR

WINNER: MONER BONDHU

Tawhida Shiropa is the founder and CEO of Moner Bondhu, a start-up that began operations in 2016. It provides mental health and well-being services, both online and offline, to people who need support to break the stigma of mental health problems in Bangladesh. It has changed the lives of 8,00,000 individuals through online counselling on different platforms and another 1,00,000 through various offline events, such as views-exchange programmes. Moner Bondhu has also formed a partnership with BGMEA to offer counselling services to a workforce of 37,000 garment workers across 75 factories. It also holds events and workshops regularly. The Moner Bondhu app allows users to access a team of professionals to seek counselling anytime and anywhere. Thus, Moner Bondhu is establishing itself as a pioneer in the field of mental health services in Bangladesh.



ANAYET RASHID
CEO of Truck Lagbe

ICT STARTUP OF THE YEAR

WINNER: TRUCK LAGBE

Truck Lagbe, founded in 2016, is a tech-oriented logistics platform that connects truck owners and shippers in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has a transport and logistics market worth \$15 billion, according to PwC. Truck Lagbe has over 20,000 trucks of various sizes and over 43,000 shippers on its platform, it has also received support and investment from IFC. Truck Lagbe offers various services, including real-time tracking of the vehicles, and a transparent price scheme which helps the users improve utilisation of their vehicles. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the service provided by Truck Lagbe proved pivotal in helping thousands of truck owners and small businesses continue their operations. Truck Lagbe Express, a new service of the start-up, is poised to expand in all of Dhaka city soon.



KAZI SAIFUDDIN MUNIR
Founder, CEO, and MD of IT Consultants Ltd

ICT BUSINESS PERSON OF THE YEAR-2023

Kazi Saifuddin Munir, founder, CEO, and MD of IT Consultants Ltd (ITCL), has guided his company to becoming a pioneer in providing electronic payment and transaction processing systems for banks. With a graduate degree from Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden, and a doctorate from Osaka Institute of Technology in Japan, he came back to Bangladesh in 1999 and founded ITCL in 2000 with just four people. ITCL now has over 350 employees, is listed on the Dhaka Stock Exchange, and earned Tk 8.8 crore in net profit last year. His creation, Q Cash, was the first payment processing consortium for banks, which now boasts 36 banks as clients. His organisation won the country's first ICT award in the local market category as the best solution provider.

“Today, let us pledge that we will continue to foster an environment where innovation thrives, dreams are realised and Bangladesh stands tall as a beacon of progress and prosperity.”

SELIM RF HUSSAIN
MD and CEO of BRAC Bank

“As a society, we still haven't grasped how to do things on time. Unless you have the mindset of saving time and more efficient use of time, I don't think the IT potential will come to us.”

MAHFUZ ANAM
Editor and publisher of The Daily Star

“The ICT sector will play a crucial role in shaping Smart Bangladesh, and as such, deserves the highest level of attention from policymakers.”

RUSSELL T AHMED
President of BASIS

“This ICT award is a representation of the innovation and digital growth in Bangladesh and the ICT sector is emerging as a fresh catalyst for economic expansion.”

CONSTANTINOS S GAVRIEL
General manager of Le Meridien Dhaka

US asks its citizens to exercise caution

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“Travellers should be aware of petty crimes such as pickpocketing in crowded areas. Crimes such as muggings, burglaries, assaults, and illegal drug trafficking constitute the majority of criminal activity in Bangladesh's major cities, but there are no indications foreigners are being targeted because of their nationality. These crimes tend to be situational, based on time and location. “Terrorist attacks can happen with little or no

warning, with terrorists targeting public areas such as tourist locations, transportation hubs, markets/shopping malls, restaurants, places of worship, school campuses, and government facilities.” About Chittagong Hill Tracts, the statement says, “Reconsider travel to Khagrachari, Rangamati, and Bandarban... due to occasional communal violence, crime, terrorism, kidnapping, and other security risks. Kidnappings have occurred in the region, including those

motivated by domestic or familial disputes, and those targeting religious minorities. Separatist organisations and political violence also pose additional threats to visitors to the region, and there have been recent instances of IED explosions and active shooting. Prior approval from the Government of Bangladesh's Ministry of Home Affairs Office of Public Safety is required if you plan to travel to these areas.”

ICT heroes honoured

FROM PAGE 12
expansion, said Constantin S Gavriel, general manager at Le Meridien Dhaka. “This is a big honour for me. I am humbled. This recognition will inspire others to come up with new ideas,” said Kazi Saifuddin Munir, the MD and CEO of ITCL, the parent company of Q-Cash. Q-Cash revolutionised electronic payment and transaction systems for banks. Today, it services 36 banks and handles daily transactions of about Tk

400 crore. Iqbal Ahmed F Hasan, the CEO of Divine IT, said he believes the country will be self-reliant in software. Divine IT has been a stalwart IT solutions provider for governmental and corporate entities since its establishment in 2005. At the forefront of Divine IT's innovation stands PrismERP, a comprehensive system that encompasses more than 65 diverse business categories, even extending its benefits to government agencies. Dynamic Solution

Innovators (DSi) is a software development company that has been catering to clients in Asia, England and the US since 2001. The company specialises in crafting Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems, e-commerce platforms, and comprehensive solutions for diverse industries. Pickaboo is a premier e-commerce platform in Bangladesh, specialising in mobile phones, electronics and gadgets. Truck Lagbe is a tech-driven logistics platform

connecting truck owners and shippers. With over 20,000 trucks and 43,000 shippers, it offers real-time tracking and truck utilisation services to enhance efficiency and reduce emissions with transparent pricing. Moner Bondhu offers mental health and wellbeing services to individuals requiring assistance in combating the mental health stigma prevailing in Bangladesh. Its mobile application empowers users to connect with a dedicated team of professionals

for counselling at their convenience, marking them as pioneers in the digital well-being sector in Bangladesh. Morin Talukder, co-founder and CEO of Pickaboo.com; Anayet Rashid, CEO of Truck Lagbe; Tawhida Shiropa, founder and CEO of Moner Bondhu; Mojahedul Hoque Abul Hasanat, chief technology officer of DSi; Iqbal Ahmed Fakhruul Hasan, founder and CEO of Divine IT; and Munir received the awards from Mannan.

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We Mourn

Mr. Harun Al Rashid Nizam
(1942-2023)

Mr. Harun Al Rashid Nizam, son of Late Mr. OR Nizam of Chittagong, breathed his last on 12th October 2023 in Dhaka. Lovingly known as KRUKRU Nizam, he was born in 5th May 1942 to a respected Chittagonian family. Having graduated from the UK he returned to the country and joined his late father's business. He went on to become one of the most distinguished businessmen in the country. He was a confidant and mentor to many. His philanthropic work touched many lives home and abroad. To his mourning family and friends, he will be remembered for his zeal for life, his quick wit and great sense of humour. We request all those that knew him to pray for his soul to rest in everlasting peace, AMEEN.

He leaves behind his loving wife Tasnim, son Obeid and bouda Mimel, daughter Reeham and son-in-law Aref, grandchildren Rayeed, Sarihah, Zidaan, Owais and Aydin.

Govt failure lets air pollution rise

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Air pollution is one of the greatest environmental risks to health, and Dhaka which has over two crore residents often tops the list of cities with the poorest air quality, according to Air Quality Index (AQI) data. Prof Salam says older vehicles tend to emit more toxic gases due to incomplete combustion of fuel. The older the vehicle, the more pollution it causes, he adds. “If we want to control air pollution in Dhaka, we must reduce the number of unfit and outdated vehicles,” Prof Salam says. **UNFIT AND OUTDATED VEHICLES** The number of vehicles without fitness certificates is growing, shows data from Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA). As of April this year, about 5.68 lakh registered vehicles did not have fitness certificates, meaning the vehicles had not gone through fitness checks. The number was 5.08 lakh in January last year. According to transport sector insiders, there are thousands of unregistered vehicles in the country, and the authorities do not have any idea about the state of those vehicles.

Moreover, BRTA's fitness checks are questionable, says transport expert Prof Hadiuzzaman. “The BRTA does not have the tools to check certain things of a vehicle,” he says. The BRTA has only one Vehicle Inspection Center (VIC), and even that is not fully functional. As a result, almost all the checks are done manually before fitness clearances are given. “But emissions cannot be measured manually. This means they [BRTA] can't ascertain the level of pollution a vehicle is causing,” he said. The government in May this year announced that it has capped the life of buses at 20 years and trucks and lorries at 25, aiming to reduce crashes and pollution. In April, over 74,000 registered buses, trucks and other commercial vehicles were past their economic lifespan and the vehicles were supposed to go under crushers. But the government backtracked from the move amid pressure from transport associations. Prof Hadiuzzaman says the maintenance cost of a vehicle multiplies when it has passed its economic lifespan, and many owners

do not spend the money needed for maintenance. The vehicles that are not properly maintained tend to cause more pollution. This is why the decision of not stopping the operation of outdated vehicles is worsening pollution, he adds. “So, the policy makers are, directly or indirectly, responsible for air pollution in the city. They can't escape responsibility for health risks faced by thousands of people.” **FEWER CNG-RUN VEHICLES** Transport sector insiders say the number of CNG-run vehicles, especially buses, minibuses, and trucks has sharply fallen over the last few years. Hardly any bus or truck uses CNG now, says Farhan Noor, general secretary of Bangladesh CNG Station Owners Association, adding that the government should incentivise vehicles that use CNG. He blames the rising prices of CNG and the government decision to keep the refilling stations closed for five hours every day for the waning popularity of CNG. According to Rupantarita Prakritik Gas Company Limited

(RPGCL), there were 5.07 lakh vehicles with CNG kits as of May this year. But the company does not know how many vehicles still use CNG as fuel. However, the energy ministry, citing BRTA data, in a report last year said only 2.38 lakh vehicles were actually using CNG. In the 2021-22 fiscal year, only 642 vehicles were fitted with kits to run on CNG. The number was 37,368 in 2014-15, shows RPGCL data. The RPGCL cancelled registration of 121 CNG conversion workshops for not starting operation after getting approval. Contacted yesterday, BRTA Chairman Nur Mohammad Mazumder said the authority was taking measures to curb air pollution. The BRTA will open a VIC at its Mirpur office on October 19, he said. “We have taken steps to set up eight more VICs at different BRTA offices. We hope those will come into operation in two or three years,” he said. Gradually, there will be a VIC at every BRTA office in the country, he said. The BRTA sought tools for testing vehicles' emissions from the Department of

Environment, he said. “As we didn't get a reply, we decided to procure the kit ourselves.” BRTA's mobile courts now take action against vehicles that emit black smoke that can be seen with the naked eye. About the large number of vehicles that do not go through fitness tests, he said one-third of the vehicles without fitness papers may not be in use any more. The BRTA is updating its data, he said, adding that vehicles without fitness certificates are penalised regularly. As to why the decision of capping the life of commercial vehicles was changed, he said the government backtracked on the decision because transport owners assumed that it would lead to a crisis of vehicles. The Road Transport and Highways Division formed a committee led by the BRTA chairman to discuss with the stakeholders and recommend how the economic life of commercial vehicles can be capped, he said. “The committee has already held a meeting, and we will give our opinion soon.”