

A peek inside Hasibul's journey of community-driven freshwater conservation



The grant is basically to inspire young conservationists to support them in their academic pursuits and help them quickly start their civic engagement projects. It is a small contribution to our long-term plan to sustainably restore Banani Lake and create a resource of fresh water and green vegetation.

We are looking forward to adding more funds and creating an awareness hub for water conservation. We are also planning on creating a prototype of the outcome of our primary research, which promises a short-term SODIS disinfection model to attain clean water. With the support of the government and NGOs, we are hoping to establish a long-term sustainable water purifying hub as well.

What are the major challenges you expect to face while executing this conservation project, and how do you plan to address them?

The freshwater conservation project is going to be implemented in the Korail community with the incorporation of the Social Impact Lab at BRACU and other local NGOs. However, the major problem in this community-driven project is money constraints. The fund is little to nothing to fulfil the goal of the project. However, getting funding from world-recognised organisations like the National Geographic Society already reflects the strength of the project, which can potentially attract philanthropists to invest more in this goodwill.

Community involvement is often crucial in conservation projects. How will you engage local communities or stakeholders in your freshwater conservation initiatives?

Our primary focus is to engage the community in conservation because otherwise, even if we clean the lake and create ways to sustainably maintain an ecosystem, people will throw dumps and trash in the lake and use it as a canal anyway. So, to address this, we are in touch with six schools in the community and jointly designing awareness materials and playful activities that will influence adolescents to be engaged in the agenda. We are also planning to reach out to the locals through mosque imams and health volunteers, and also create a water committee with the help of local leaders to sustainably create recurring awareness.

Long-term sustainability is a crucial aspect of conservation efforts. How do you plan to ensure the continuity and sustainability of your project's impact beyond the grant period?

As already stated, we are looking for more grants. However, one of the co-founders of the project, Lamisa Manha, recently won the Climate Innovation Challenge supported by UNDP Bangladesh and Columbia Business School. She got us in touch with a company called TRACA that works with carbon trading, which has shown interest in creating a sustainable long-term partnership with us.

What message or advice would you give to aspiring conservationists or individuals passionate about freshwater conservation?

Altruist mindset and philanthropist cause won't be enough to diligently work on such a crucial, nationwide problem. Aspiring conservationists should first gain vital knowledge and practice research if they want to persistently pursue freshwater conservation or any other conservationist career. However, possibilities are wide and doors are open everywhere. You need to keep co-creating positive viable solutions and knocking on doors to eventually find success in this field.

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FARHAN MUSFIQUE

The National Geographic Society and The Nature Conservancy have recently awarded Hasibul Hasan Ahmed, a final-year Computer Science and Engineering student at BRAC University, a US\$2,000 seed grant for his research externship on 'Community and Conservation'. Hasibul's project focuses on revitalising Dhaka's Banani Lake and the Korail slum in Dhaka through a community-driven freshwater conservation effort. In an exclusive interview, we dive into Hasibul's journey so far, details about his externship, and the passions that drive him to save the environment in this rapidly changing modern world.

Congratulations on receiving the grant. Could you describe your project and its primary objectives?

The project is mainly focused on primary research I conducted during my two-month externship at the National Geographic Society and The Nature Conservancy's collaboration on Fresh Water Conservation and Community. Back then, I started a philanthropic, cause-driven research training program for inspiring water conservationist efforts among students. It ended up being a 25-hour effort-driven research of the Korail community, focusing on the conservation of the Banani Lake.

Afterwards, students of the program confessed their interest in continuing the research, which led me to create EcoFlow Revive, a community-driven project to preserve Banani Lake, in collaboration with the Social Impact Lab at BRAC University. Other than cleaning the lake, our goal is to motivate the Korail community in freshwater conservation by promoting behavioural change: starting from educating school students in the community hubs.

How did you manage the externship? Did you apply for it?

The research-based externship on 'Global Freshwater and Community Conservation'

by the National Geographic Society and The Nature Conservancy, powered by Paragon One, is for undergraduate students aged 18 to 25. Students who have had leadership capacity, prior research knowledge, and interest in conservationist efforts can apply for the position, and find the externship on the Paragon One website. I am also a student ambassador for the recruitment process now, so anybody interested can reach out to me if they want to apply.

I was selected for the externship mainly because I had prior accolades that helped me pass their rigorous recruitment of a three-step process: application submission, a recorded prompt-based interview, and a remote online interview. Those who complete this externship become eligible to pitch their idea to promote conservationist projects and in turn, receive seed funds for their community project.

Besides your education, what else are you involved with?

I am the co-founder of Social Impact Lab at BRAC University, a student-led organisation that empowers students to be social entrepreneurs by co-creating solutions together. I am also an alumnus of the Aspire Leadership Program founded at Harvard University, an alumnus of the UN Millennium Fellowship Class of 2022, and a Global Fellow at the Open Society University Network.

What inspired you to initiate this project and focus on freshwater conservation?

My primary focus was to contribute back to the community where our old campus of BRAC University used to be. After we shifted to the new campus, my intuition aligned with my mindset. Applying for the grant helped me create a way to support the community of Korail, and the research-based externship inspired me to focus on freshwater conservation.

How do you envision this grant contributing to the success and impact of your conservation efforts?

Four lessons from working abroad

SYEDA ADIBA ARIF

It baffles me how little of the world I have seen.

I started my professional career with an aspiration to work for a global business that would enable me to have a borderless career. Last year, I had the chance to live and work in South Korea for three months on an assignment and here are four lessons I learned during my time.

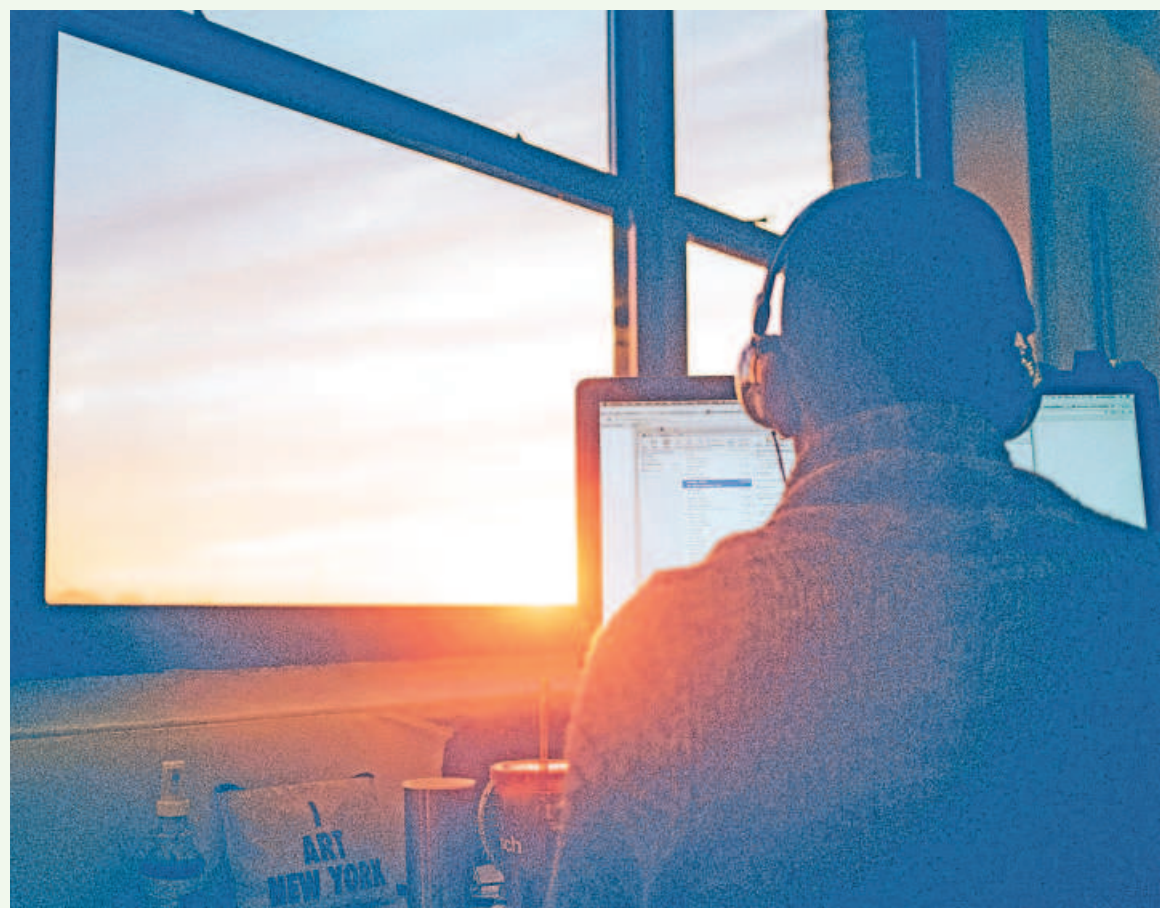
People trump all else

Everything begins by trying to understand the people that constitute the place. While learning what makes, ticks and drives them, you learn that your own priorities are personal to you, may not always resonate with others, and it will be foolish to impose them mindlessly. In the end, the key to be accepted is to accept differences first.

I personally felt the most appreciated by my colleagues when I immersed myself in their lifestyle, enjoyed their foods and traditions, and conversed about their history. It is crucial to apprise yourself on the culture of the place you are living in, learn basic words and phrases from their language, and always be open to learning new ways of work every day. Most importantly, it is crucial to extend others the same level of empathy you want extended to you.

Balance of independence and interdependence

You are never truly aware of how strong you are until you learn to navigate life alone. In the process of finding food that aligns with your palate and values, using public transport that entails translating every single station stop using apps, and coming home tired from work and cooking for one - you learn to stay



resilient under pressure. You also learn that it's okay to be vulnerable and ask for help when you need it.

Life transcends work

Despite being some of the most hardworking and diligent people, South Koreans make it their mission to prioritise personal well-being. A lifetime of eating healthy and being active leads to some of the most thriving elderly population, vividly visible in public transport as 80-year-old people are just as independent and easy-going as the younger generations. My co-workers would maximise their life after work and at the weekends, engaging themselves in activities ranging from golf to hiking to working out or simply relaxing by the Han River with loved ones around a Korean BBQ.

Normality deserves equal appreciation

Despite having the most exciting time when no two days are the same, I fondly remembered the comforts of familiarity. Being able to understand everything being said around or having loved ones to come home to is a privilege we barely ever acknowledge. If nothing else, living abroad will teach you to be more appreciative of routine and ordinariness. Poetically enough, the most common word I caught and used during my stay in South Korea was "Gamsahamnida", translating to "Thank You", and after a very meaningful and fulfilling stay there, I truly did feel thankful for the incredible experience.

My advice to every ambitious young professional would be to actively look for opportunities to live and work abroad. You will learn things about yourself that surprise you, appreciate the little joys of the big world around you, and in the end permanently yearn to know, learn and explore more.

JOBS SPOTLIGHT



IQVIA

Lead Machine Learning Engineer

Deadline: N/A

Eligibility:

- MS or PhD degree in Computer Science, AI, Machine Learning, or related technical field.

- Experience working on creating and deploying machine learning algorithms.

- Advanced proficiency with Python (experience with other languages is a plus).

Minimum experience: 5-8 years

Apply through the official LinkedIn page of IQVIA.



General Pharmaceutical Ltd.

Senior Product Executive, Marketing

Deadline: February 17

Eligibility:

- M.Pharm/B.Pharm from any reputed university.

- Responsible for preparing strategic plans, promotional materials, and engaging KOL for assigned products to achieve targets.

- Able to perform new product launching using marketing analysis to increase sales revenue.

Minimum experience: 2-3 years

Apply through the official LinkedIn page of General Pharmaceutical Ltd.



Siemens Energy Bangladesh Ltd.

STG Client Manager

Deadline: N/A

Eligibility:

- Bachelor of Science in Engineering.

- Must have experience in the energy industry and sales/business development role.

- Experience in turbo-machinery, with strong technical understanding of the steam turbine and generator preferred.

Minimum experience: 5-7 years

Apply through the official LinkedIn page of Siemens Energy.