

BTI THE DAILY STAR STELLAR WOMEN 2023

# Glimpses of Brilliance

## bt The Daily Star STELLAR WOMEN

Spark Your Inner Power

In Bangladesh, women are forging paths of success by harnessing their inner strength to confront and overcome societal challenges. These women exemplify resilience and determination, breaking traditional roles and excelling in various sectors. Their stories of triumph not only inspire but also redefine societal norms, paving the way for broader empowerment and equality. The Daily Star and building technology and ideas ltd (bti) joined forces to launch the initiative ‘Stellar Women – Spark Your Inner Power’ to recognize these inspiring women. After successful completion of season 1, “bti The Daily Star Stellar Women 2023” Gala was held on June 8, 2024, at the banquet hall of Kurmitola Golf Club in the capital. At the event, twelve outstanding women from 12 different sectors in Bangladesh were honored for their exceptional accomplishments in fields ranging from development sector and technology to architecture, education, culture, corporate, agriculture, sports, writing, start-up & entrepreneurship, social welfare, and journalism. The Honorable Minister of Housing and Public Works, R.A.M. Obaidul Muktadir Chowdhury, graced the event as the chief guest.



Winners of “bti The Daily Star Stellar Women 2023” posed for a photo at the Banquet Hall of the Kurmitola Golf Club.

PHOTO COURTESY: STAR



“Now, we see that 60 percent of attendees in village high schools and colleges are women. This didn’t happen overnight. The government provided various facilities to women, offered incentives and implemented numerous measures that led to their enormous empowerment.”

**R.A.M. OBAIDUL MUKTADIR CHOWDHURY,**  
Minister of Housing and Public Works



“The main theme of this whole effort is to highlight the brilliant roles that women are playing in the country. The leadership emerging at practical, enterprise, company, and small business levels is setting a trend and contributing significantly to the nation’s progress.”

**MAHFUZ ANAM,**  
Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star



“Through this initiative, we’re honouring those women who’ve been working for the society and having a profound impact in building the nation, despite facing enormous challenges. The stories of these stellar women and their determination will inspire and empower other women in the society.”

**FR KHAN,**  
Managing Director of bti



“bti has unwavering commitment towards women empowerment and with this aim bti has initiated ‘bti The Daily Star Stellar Women’ for those who have enormous contribution to the society in different sectors, including education, development sector, architecture, agriculture and technology.”

**NALAKA HETTIARACHCHI,**  
CEO of bti

### SHAMSIN AHMED



Shamsin Ahmed, the visionary founder of Identity Inclusion, was inspired by a loved one’s struggle with psychosocial issues, and the subsequent bias they faced. Identity Inclusion focuses on training youth to provide psychosocial support and advocate for more inclusivity in all spheres. Over the past years, Shamsin has successfully assembled a team of social workers to assist people with severe mental illnesses and disabilities. The organization promotes the integration of individuals with special needs into mainstream society. Additionally, Shamsin offers consultancy services for disability inclusion. Through her dedicated efforts, she strives to reshape societal systems and policies, paving the way for a more inclusive world.

### TASFIA TASBIN



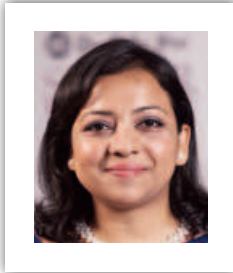
Tasfia Tasbin co-founded markopolo.ai with her friend Rubaiyat during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide digital marketing solutions for entrepreneurs. During the early stages, they partnered with some digital marketing agencies to establish their business. Their innovative product gained global recognition after being showcased at one of the world’s largest product exhibitions. Currently, markopolo.ai operates in 31 countries, offering data-driven and automated digital marketing solutions that empower small businesses. Tasfia notes that many of her customers are unaware that the product is entirely developed in Bangladesh. Her contributions to the industry have earned her a spot on Forbes’ 30 Under 30 list and a BIG win in 2023.

### NAZLI HUSSAIN



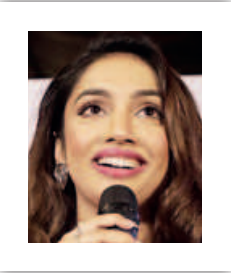
Nazli Hussain completed her education at BUET and honed her skills as a Project Manager at the British Council. With over five years of experience in architectural projects for banks, Nazli gained invaluable insights into Bangladesh’s construction sector. She attributes her practical experience to her studies as pivotal in mastering the intricacies of architecture. Nazli’s passion for sustainability led her to earn LEED accreditation from the U.S. Green Building Council while pursuing studies in sustainability. She proudly holds the distinction of being the country’s first LEED Accredited Professional and serves as the Founder and architect at Praxis Architects. Her journey underscores a commitment to integrating sustainability into architectural practices, setting a profound example in the field.

### SADIA JAFRIN



Sadia Jafrin, a pharmacy graduate, embarked on a transformative journey in 2019 when she founded the ‘Grow Your Reader’ Foundation. Driven by a desire to make a more significant impact on society beyond her career in pharmaceuticals, Sadia’s foundation has become a beacon of educational empowerment. Recognized as an Acumen fellow in 2022 and a Top 100 Leader in Education, Sadia also serves as a Young Leader of the Queen’s Commonwealth Trust, advocating for improved education for underprivileged children. The ‘Grow Your Reader’ Foundation has pioneered initiatives such as a mobile library (Wheels of Wisdom), Book Garage, reading circles (online book library), and a dedicated school called ‘School er Baire Shikkha’, in Jessore.

### RIDY SHEIKH



Ridy Sheikh, born and brought up in Moscow, has maintained a strong bond with her Bangladeshi heritage due to her mother. Her passion for dance ignited at the tender age of 5 with Bangladeshi folk dance, marking the beginning of a lifelong journey in the arts. By 15, she was already serving as a junior choreographer at her school, eventually gaining recognition through her participation in ‘So You Think You Can Dance’, Ukraine edition. Today, Ridy stands as the founder and choreographer of Starbase Dance Studio and has also ventured into the world of fashion with her brand, Gemini. She is among Bangladesh’s eight content creators selected by UNDP Bangladesh to promote Sustainable Development Goals, emphasizing clean energy and environmental conservation.

### SHAMIMA AKHTER



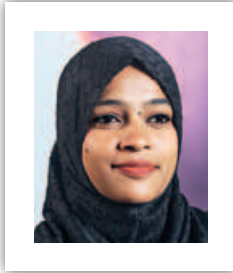
Shamima Akhter’s journey is a testament to her unwavering passion for mountaineering and her bold decision to transition from a successful 8-year NGO career to corporate leadership. Starting her career as a Communication Officer at the UN, Shamima swiftly progressed to managing USAID projects before transitioning to corporate roles at Qubee and Coca-Cola. Her ascent culminated in becoming the first Bangladeshi female director at Coca-Cola and she now holds the prestigious position of Director of Corporate Affairs, Partnerships, and Communications at Unilever Bangladesh Limited. Shamima’s tenure at Unilever highlights her dedication to overcoming gender biases and fostering a gender-equitable workplace. Her story inspires others to challenge norms and forge paths to success in male-dominated industries.

### DR. SAKINA KHANAM



Dr. Sakina Khanam, Principal Scientific Officer at BINA (Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture), became the Stellar Woman 2023 in Agriculture for being the leader of the team that spearheaded the development of the BINA-25 rice variety. Her keen awareness of climate related threats to agriculture motivates her quest for sustainable crop cultivation methods, crucial for regions grappling with saline soils and land scarcity. Currently, Dr. Sakina focuses on combating food insecurity in remote Bangladesh by cultivating climate resilient strains of rice, peanuts, jute, and mung beans with her team. Her pioneering efforts not only aim to boost crop yields but also reduce the nation’s reliance on imports. Dr. Sakina’s dedication and groundbreaking achievements in agriculture positioned her as an inspiring figure for aspiring Bangladeshi women.

### SALMA AKTER MONE



Salma Akter Mone’s passion for football, her favorite sport, led her to practice late at night on the streets of Netrokona, where facilities for women’s sports were scarce and limited. Her breakthrough came in grade 9 when her coach recognized her talent, paving the way for her to finally play on the fields and enroll in referee courses. In 2021, Salma achieved her dream of becoming a FIFA assistant referee. By 2023, she became the first Bangladeshi female AFC Elite Assistant Referee. Salma’s journey exemplifies her resilience, illustrating how perseverance and familial support can help someone overcome barriers and achieve success in professional sports.

### LUTFUNNAHAR PIKI



Lutfunnahar Piki embarked on a remarkable journey from becoming an Assistant Commissioner of Taxes to achieving her PhD. Her creative spirit, rekindled by her husband’s encouragement, culminated in the publication of her debut novel ‘Otopor’ in 2019, marking a significant milestone in her literary career. Piki’s story is an evidence to the timeless nature of creativity, demonstrating that it can flourish at any stage of life. Her pursuits in literature began during her HSC level, when she wrote columns for ‘Torun Kontho’ in ‘The Daily Ittefaq’. Currently serving as Additional Commissioner of Taxes at the National Board of Revenue, Piki continues to inspire with her scholarly achievements and professional dedication.

### MONOSHITA AYRUANI



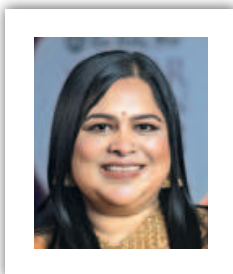
Monoshita Ayruani boldly challenged societal taboos surrounding women’s undergarments by fostering open conversations about diversity and consulting on undergarment sizes. Recognizing Bangladesh’s prowess in exporting lingerie abroad but the absence of quality options for local women, she founded SHAPE Industries Limited to provide affordable and diverse innerwear for all body types. What began with a team of 5 has grown to employ 12 individuals, driven by Monoshita’s vision to empower women through inclusive fashion. SHAPE Industries not only meets a market need but also champions body positivity and dismantles stereotypes associated with lingerie, marking a transformative shift in Bangladesh’s apparel sector towards inclusivity and empowering choices in women’s innerwear.

### TAWHIDA SHIROPA



Starting with personal funds, Tawhida Shiropa founded ‘Moner Bondhu’ to address mental health needs, a cause close to her heart. Overcoming initial hurdles, including securing grants, Tawhida’s journey is a testament to her dedication. Her initiative initially targeted the RMG sector and its workers, organizing 5 to 7 successful programs before the pandemic. Despite challenges posed by COVID-19, Moner Bondhu continued its work, contributing to Tawhida earning international acclaim. The Tommy Hilfiger Fashion Frontier Award further bolstered her motivation, recognizing her year-long efforts and commitment to improving mental health access in Bangladesh. Tawhida Shiropa’s transformation from journalist to mental health entrepreneur underscores her impact in reshaping mental healthcare accessibility nationwide.

### ROZINA ISLAM



Rozina Islam, now a Senior Reporter at Prothom Alo, started working with BRAC after her HSC exams. Even after taking a gap, she persisted in her career path, eventually contributing to ‘Ajker Kagoj’, where she wrote for the business page. Her scholarship in Delhi in 2005 played a pivotal role in shaping her journalism career. Rozina’s steadfast dedication to exposing corruption earned her the prestigious ‘Anti-Corruption Champions’ Award from the US Department of State in 2022. The previous year, she was honored with the ‘Free Press Award’ in Amsterdam, recognizing her complete dedication to journalism amidst challenging circumstances.