

CAMPUS

DHAKA THURSDAY FEBRUARY 6, 2025, MAGH 23, 1431 BS

A PUBLICATION OF The Daily Star

SCAN THE QR
CODE TO ACCESS
CAMPUS ONLINE



CAREER STRUGGLES OF *young female lawyers*

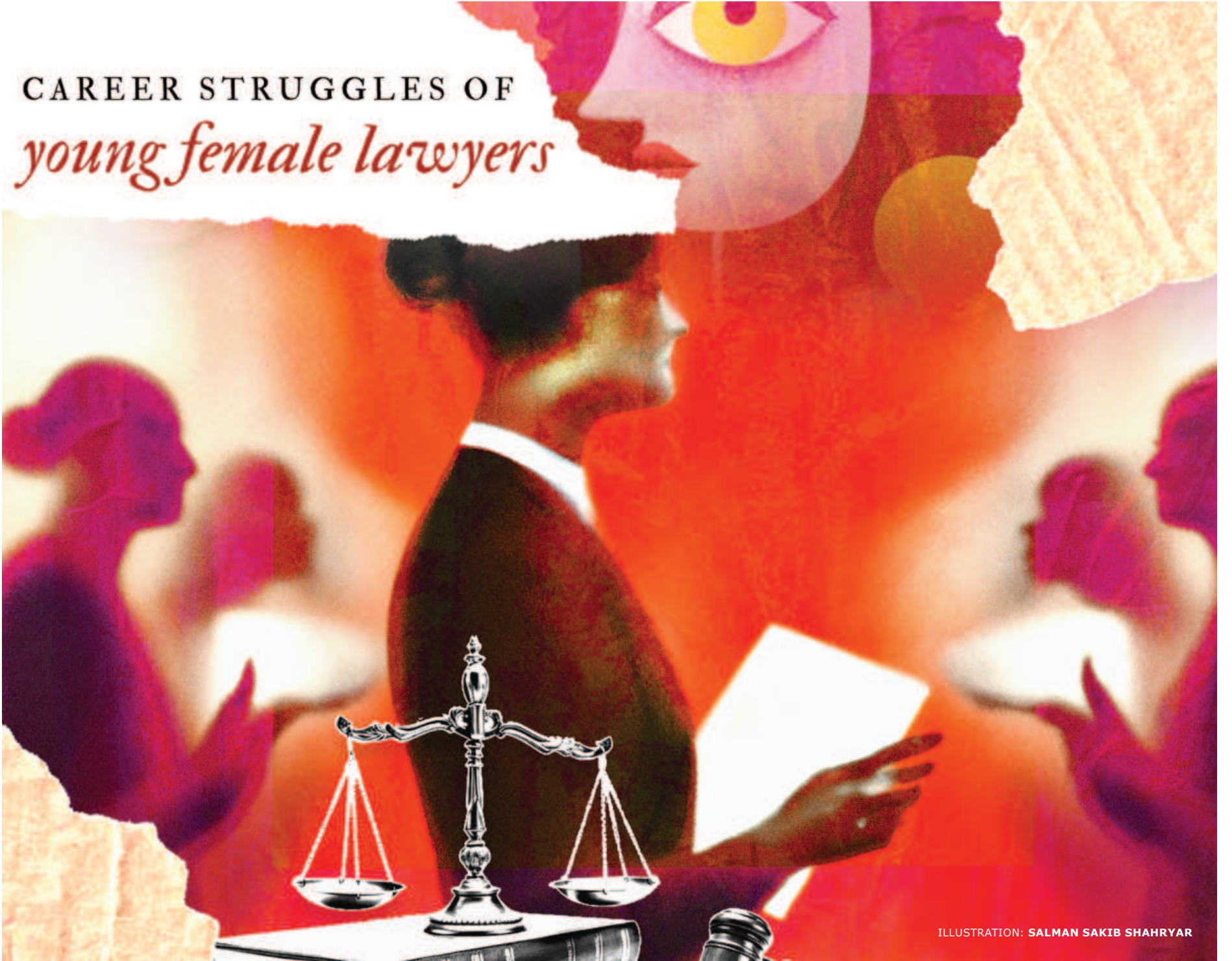


ILLUSTRATION: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

WALTON Smart Fridge

নম্বর
রেফ্রিজারেটর ব্র্যান্ড

পছন্দ আর প্রয়োজন যেমনই হোক, ফ্রিজ মানেই ওয়ালটন।
আপনাদের আস্থা আর ভালোবাসায় ১১ বারের মতো আমাদের এই অর্জন।

For Details: 16267 | waltonbd.com

■ TV SERIES ■

SUPERMAN & LOIS

A heartfelt exploration of hope, love, and family

SABIL SADAT ZAHIR

Hope. That's humanity's most powerful trait, the tool that gives us the strength to be better. That's what Superman has always stood for – he's a character designed to inspire people to hope for a better tomorrow. For a character with countless adaptations, the Man of Steel's most authentic portrayal is delivered in *Superman & Lois*, which captures his unwavering optimism while transcending the typical superhero narrative by focusing on profound character development and addressing real-world personal struggles.

Departing from earlier adaptations, this TV show presents Clark Kent (Tyler Hoechlin) well into his career as Superman. He is a devoted husband to Lois Lane (Elizabeth Tulloch) and a father to teenage twin boys, Jonathan and Jordan. The show establishes a multilayered narrative, with the focus being more on family drama and character growth against the obvious superhero backdrop. The series has unique spins on classic Superman villains such as Bizarro and Lex Luthor and, throughout all four seasons, the antagonists' arcs parallel the Kent family's story in contrasting ways.



As the title suggests, the show is about Lois just as much as it is about Clark. Even without powers, she helps Clark through her journalistic skills, and the two complement each other by taking different approaches to tackle the villains and conflicts. Unlike most love stories that focus on the chase, the show features them as a loving couple who have been together for years, keeping the spark alive despite facing countless challenges together, be it the very real struggles of parenthood or the otherworldly threats of

superheroism.

Superman & Lois showed that superheroes can not only have well-crafted character dramas but also be genuinely relatable without being cynical. The show tackles themes like mental health, parenthood, and relationships – all things deeply rooted in everyday lives but seldom addressed in the genre. The show perfectly captures the essence of Superman, reminding us that hope and love can guide us to become the best versions of ourselves.

OPPORTUNITIES



Optimizely - Associate Customer Success Manager

ELIGIBILITY

Relevant customer success and/or account management experience in a software company.

Excellent written and verbal communication skills in English.

Highly driven with strong desire to achieve top results and break through barriers, determined to adapt quickly and comfortable with some ambiguity.

Strong conflict management and conflict resolution skills.

Visit careers.optimizely.com to learn more.

DEADLINE: NOT MENTIONED



Western Sydney International Scholarships for undergraduate students

ELIGIBILITY

New international students, who are not Australian citizens, New Zealand citizens, or permanent residents of Australia.

All applicants are automatically considered, no separate application is required. Successful recipients are notified of their award in the Offer of Admission letter. Scholarships are granted on a first-come-first-served basis until filled.

Applicants must submit:
A completed application to Western Sydney University.

Visit thedailystar.net/campus/opportunities to learn more.

DEADLINE: MAY 15, 2025 (FOR SPRING INTAKE).

Editor & Publisher
Mahfuz Anam

Features Editor and
Head of Content
Marketing
Ehsanur Raza Ronny

Campus In-Charge
Faisal Bin Iqbal

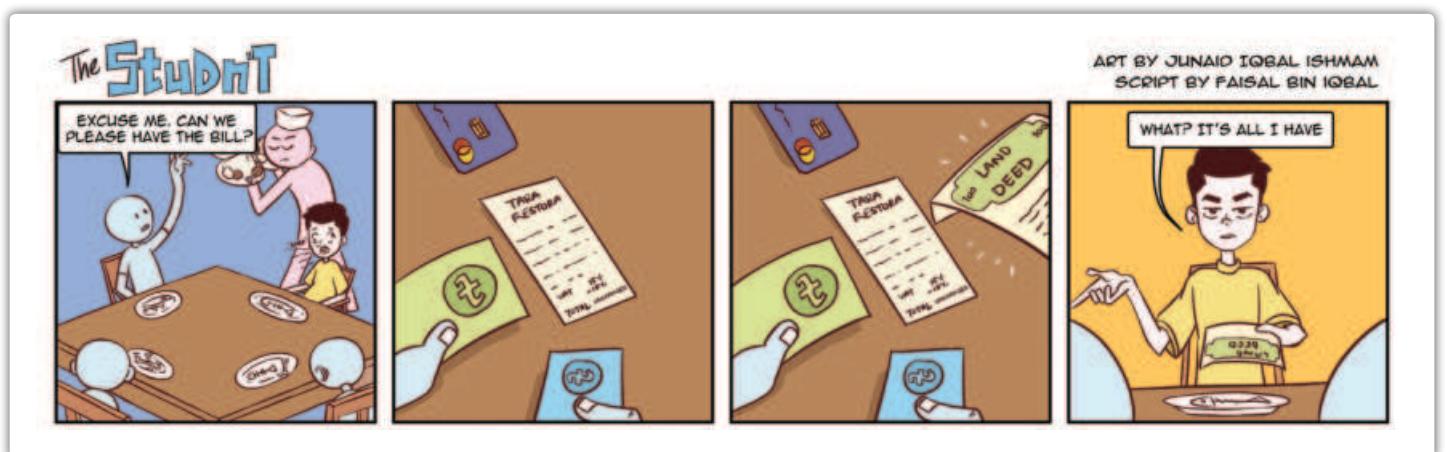
Campus Team
Syeda Afrin Tarannum
Abir Hossain
Adrita Zaima Islam

Photographer
Orchid Chakma

Graphics & Layout
TDS Creative Graphics

Production
Shamim Chowdhury

Send your articles,
feedback, and
opinion to campus@thedailystar.net
Find our content online
at thedailystar.net/campus





Vision to Legacy – Delivering a quarter-century of transformative education

A bold vision took root in Bangladesh 25 years ago – a vision that changed the course of the education industry through academic excellence, innovation, and perspectives. Today, that vision has been transformed into a remarkable journey of a school. International School Dhaka (ISD) embodies the highest standard of learning in the country. As it celebrates its 25-year milestone, ISD is mapping a new course with a pioneering vision. It's a framework designed to drive education into the future while honouring its legacy.

In an era when traditional rote learning dominated the classrooms of Bangladesh, ISD brought a revolutionary approach. The International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum has had a significant impact on the education sector around the world, especially in Dhaka. With its emphasis on critical thinking, inquiry-based learning, and real-world applications, the IB curriculum altered the way students learn and prepare for challenges in an interconnected world.

Within 25 years, thousands of graduates have carried this ethos of innovation and curiosity into some of the world's most prestigious universities and companies. It's a testament to the curriculum's effectiveness in shaping young people's futures.

The IB curriculum is divided into three phases: Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP), and Diploma Programme (DP). From nurturing young, inquisitive minds in PYP

to developing well-rounded young adults in DP, the curriculum consistently delivers excellence. Each phase, whether during the time of exploration in MYP or intensive research in DP, continues to equip the learners with skills to thrive in life.

The IB's uniqueness lies in its focus on relevance. For example, instead of isolating students with classroom lessons, the programme encourages learners to relate their studies to global challenges. Learning in the curriculum goes beyond textbooks. Students are designing robots, debating ethical dilemmas, or analysing environmental data. The curriculum is steeped in interdisciplinary learning and community engagement, so students don't merely memorise facts. They learn to discover their passions and develop skills that last for a lifetime.

Now, let's dive into what makes ISD stand out in the country's competitive academic landscape, aside from the benefits of IB. Over the past 25 years, the school has continuously raised the bar of education by introducing cutting-edge programmes that are redefining learning. It's also accredited by the Council of International Schools (CIS) and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). These accreditations are given to those schools

that provide high-quality education.

The school created opportunities for robotics enthusiasts to dive into the intricacies of artificial intelligence through Carnegie Mellon Robotics Academy. They brought official coaches from Barca Academy (FC Barcelona) to sharpen the football skills of the student-athletes. Aspiring swimmers got the opportunity to benefit from the AUSTSwim-certified programme. Language enthusiasts thrived under the second language diploma and became bilingual citizens of the world.

It is this international outlook that perfectly underlines the school's new mission, to prepare students for global citizenship and academic success through a dynamic IB curriculum, supported by a diverse community. Innovative learning is at the heart of its vision, supported by the values of well-being,

kindness, and responsibility – all absolutely critical for a fairer and more peaceful world.

Besides such remarkable initiatives, the school has also launched scholarships to make a transformative education accessible to smart and curious kids, regardless of background. The scholarships are offered to Grade 9-11 students for young people from 14-17 years old. Applicants must demonstrate strong academic ability, leadership potential, and a commitment

to co-curricular activities. Based on their academic record, students will receive a full waiver on admission fees and between a 50 and 90 percent scholarship on their school fees. These scholarships are more than financial aid; they are the gateway for remarkable students to join a community that values diversity and excellence.

All these initiatives, coupled with an international teaching staff from over 20 countries and a student body from 33 nations, create a melting pot of cultures, perspectives, and ideas. Such a diverse community enables learners to develop a distinctive worldview, which aids them in navigating any kind of challenges and addressing global issues conveniently. ISD successfully builds a community where people, regardless of their background, find a place to belong and thrive.

ISD's story is about transformation. For the past 25 years, the school has blended local culture with global expertise and created a space where students can grow and excel throughout life. It showcased that learning is the most powerful when it's purposeful. The school has been a beacon of innovation and excellence throughout the years. As the school moves forward with its bold strategy of ISD 2.0, it invites the community to join it on its journey to redefine the education sector further. With its unwavering dedication and pioneering spirit, ISD is poised to lead the next generation into a world of endless possibilities.



CAREER

Career struggles of YOUNG FEMALE LAWYERS

“People need to let go of the backdated perceptions regarding our professional capabilities being tied to our gender. We are just as equipped to act as bearers of justice as our male counterparts, and it is high time that we start being treated as such.”

ILLUSTRATION:
ADRITA ZAIMA ISLAM

MD. NAYEEM HAIDER and ADRITA ZAIMA ISLAM

According to Justice Audit Bangladesh, as of December 2016, there were 57,530 enrolled advocates in Bangladesh, of which only 7,309 were female. This vast disparity in numbers is a rather apt representation of the gruesome reality of pursuing law as a female in Bangladesh. Stereotypes and misogynistic perceptions have meant that not only are women deterred from entering the profession, but the few that do are faced with a host of unfair challenges that make it difficult for them to gain professional success at par with their male colleagues.

Speaking from her own experiences and from what she has heard and seen, Samira*, an apprentice lawyer working in the District and Session Judge’s Court, Chittagong said, “Although equality is enshrined in our constitution, we do live in a patriarchal society. The clients, both male and female, oftentimes prefer opening up to male lawyers rather than to female lawyers. They tend to think that male lawyers are far more knowledgeable and approachable, and they look down upon us.”

Contemplating the reasoning behind these biases, Barrister Sweety Ahmed, an advocate of the District and Sessions Judge’s Court, Dhaka, and a lecturer at the London College of Legal Studies (South), opines, “Clients feel that men have more experience than women because they assume women are involved in other activities besides their career, such as looking after their homes and their children. Because of this perception, many clients believe that men will be able to work harder.”

Alena Khan, a senior advocate

at the Supreme Court of Bangladesh who also runs the Bangladesh Human Rights Foundation, strengthens this point, saying, “When I started out, my abilities were doubted. A lot of people used to think that I would not be able to handle challenging issues or high-profile cases because I was a female.”

Advocate Shathika*, a practitioner at the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, highlights some of the ways the systemic injustices make law a difficult field for women, “The decision of who gets seats or rooms at the High Court rests upon the bar association. I have heard them say that women don’t practice enough or are not lawyers of a high enough stature to deserve seats, so we are often overlooked during this process. This happened to me when I was lobbying for a seat. Male lawyers, who were far junior to me, were

selected instead.”

“Additionally, when it comes to bar association elections, female lawyers are rarely ever appointed to high posts with significant responsibilities. Their positions are kept limited to that of Cultural Secretary or Assistant Secretary,” adds Shathika.

Rumana Sultana Prome, a 31-year-old lawyer practising in the Gazipur District and Sessions Judge Court, says, “I have faced prejudicial behaviour in my everyday practice. People say and do things that may not appear to be so but are still disrespectful or offensive.”

Moreover, there are exclusionary schemes in the system that prevent women from gaining promotions or building their careers.

Khushnud Raisa Ushika, a young advocate at the District and Session Judge’s Court, Chattogram, says, “Despite equal or greater effort, female lawyers are not given the same pay as our male counterparts. While collaborating on cases, our contributions are overlooked or credited to our male colleagues instead.”

The biases against young female lawyers also manifest in other forms of subtle discrimination like thinly veiled, disparaging comments, and the expectation of them to conform to conservative social norms while speaking.

Samira elaborates, “This is a profession where you need to be straightforward with what you say, but in the case of women when you use terms like ‘rape victim’, ‘sperm count’, or other explicit technical terms in front of the judges or other lawyers, they consider you to be ultra-modern, which is difficult for them to accept. They give us this sort of accusatory look as if to ask, why are you so insolent? This does not apply to male lawyers.”

Young female lawyers also often fall prey to sexual misconduct in the workplace. Samira speaks at length about her experience on the matter, “A lot of my seniors are very cooperative and friendly, but there are also those who consider me to be someone they can chase after. There are those who develop a romantic interest in me. If they can gather that I am trying to ignore them and that I don’t reciprocate their feelings, it triggers aggression from them, and they badmouth me to my colleagues behind my back.”

Sweety adds, “I have noticed that sometimes if a woman wants to aim for a high position or wants to advance in her career, she receives inappropriate offers.”

In courtrooms and corridors, in the common spaces and cafeterias where clients and spectators are present, female lawyers have to put up with crass comments, mockery, and harassment simply because they are female and chose to work in a male-dominated field. “The first time I walked into the Judge court, I felt people staring at me like they had seen an alien. It made me very uncomfortable,” says Sweety.

The lack of proper regulatory bodies capable of enforcing anti-harassment rules at the courts means that perpetrators often get away without any accountability. Samira laments, “While we were still in university, the male students had the fear that if they mistreated their female classmates, they might get rusticated or punished by the authorities. This is not the case in the court building. The only thing you can do is file a suit or a case against the person causing you distress, but it is not possible to do that in the case of every single person.”

The legal profession has long been characterised as being unfit for women. Without the proper cooperation and understanding from people in the personal realm of their lives, the path to success for these female lawyers

becomes exponentially harder.

Prome says, “A number of social, religious, professional, and ideological factors often stand in the way of women becoming lawyers. It wasn’t different in my case either; my family didn’t want me to pursue this profession.”

“One needs to spend a lot of time in court and a lot of time in the law chamber. Partners who do not understand the demands of the profession can create problems. My husband belongs to the same profession and understands the work we have to do. But others, with partners who aren’t as understanding, have suffered. If a lawyer’s husband feels that his wife shouldn’t talk to other men or if he is possessive of her, then that creates problems,” says Sweety.

Young female lawyers who have children face the added difficulty of balancing their careers with caring for their children. The lack of daycare facilities and substantial support from their workplace presents a major challenge for young mothers who practice law.

Advocate Kazi Nazma Begum of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh describes her struggles in the years following her son’s birth, “Oftentimes, my senior would task me with a hearing, and for that, of course, I’d have to read the file and study the case. But with a baby that got sick often, how could I concentrate on that? Putting that sort of effort at home and then going to work the next day became an impossible matter. I had to choose one, and I decided that my child was my priority.”

However, even for women who manage to find a way to balance their maternal responsibilities with their career aspirations, things are not easy. Prome says, “I have faced questions many times about why I returned to practice despite having small children, with people looking down upon me for not staying at home fully. Unfortunately, there really isn’t any support system in place to help women who choose to have children.”

Male lawyers with young children rarely, if ever, face the same questions and prejudices.

It is these difficulties – the entrenched biases, the discrimination in recognition and pay, the lack of support, coupled with responsibilities towards one’s child – that, in many cases, push women out of the legal profession. A result of this is that many women opt for corporate or academic careers instead.

Advocate Maksuda Khanom of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, who now works in the legal division of Midland Bank PLC, shares, “I decided that if I went for a job instead, my work would be limited to certain hours and I would be able to spend more time taking care of my child. But I still do miss practising. I feel that I could have done very well if I had continued with it.”

Alena Khan states, “While strides have been made in terms of gender equality, there is still room for improvement. Some organisations, law firms, and courts have formulated gender equality policies. However, the proper implementation of these policies is lacking. Even though anti-harassment committees exist, they are not always effective.”

On possible solutions to these issues, she opines, “Mentoring opportunities for female lawyers need to be expanded to encourage them to enter and succeed in the profession. The introduction of flexible working hours would allow women to easily maintain a balance between family and work life.”

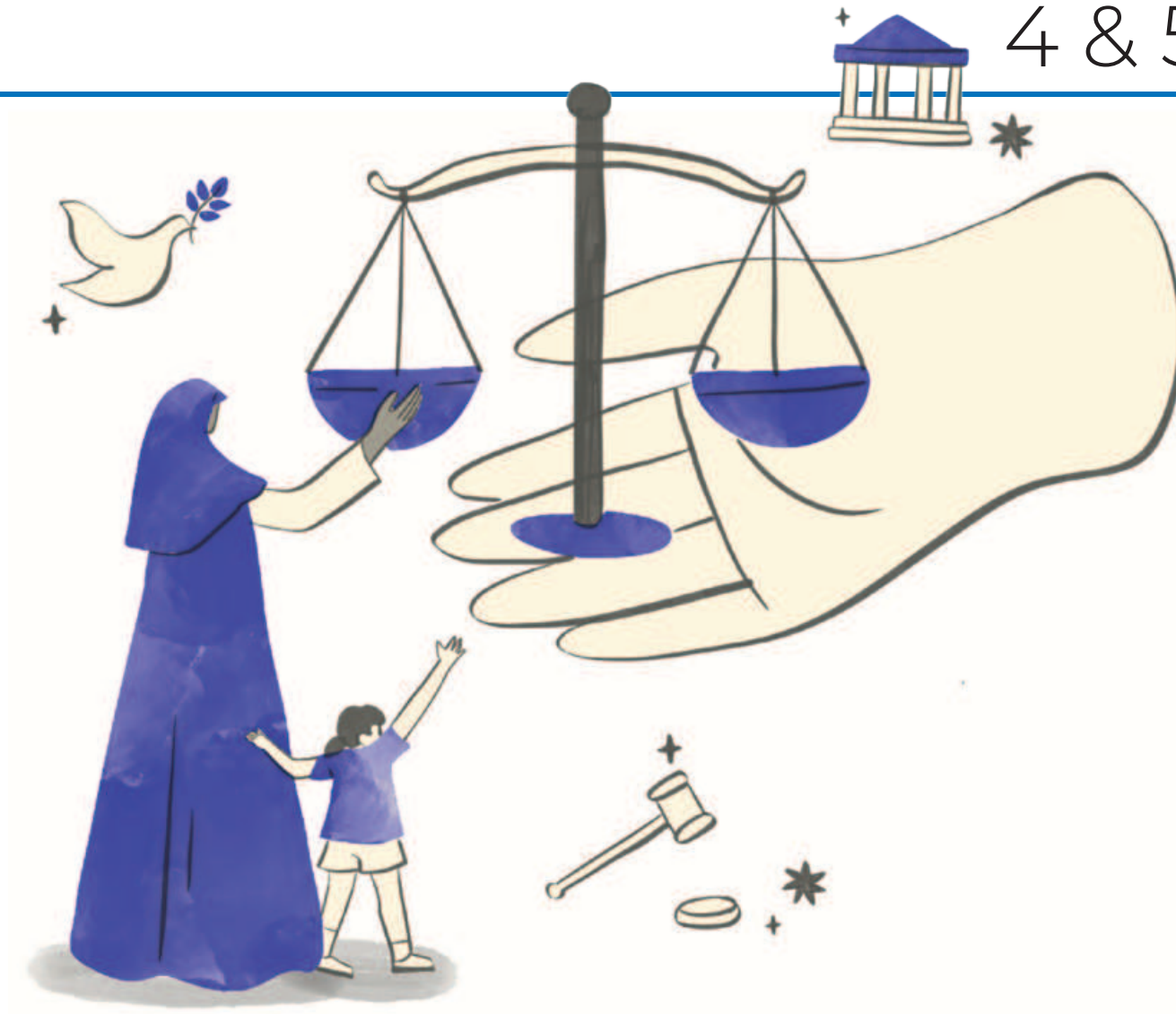
Maksuda adds, “If the courts could take the initiative to provide daycare facilities for children, it would be of great help to young mothers.”

With many women having done exceedingly well for themselves in this profession, Sweety Ahmed and many others are optimistic about progress.

However, Shathikha feels disillusioned. “People, particularly our male colleagues and those who seek legal counsel from us, need to let go of the backdated perceptions regarding our professional capabilities being tied to our gender. We are just as equipped to act as bearers of justice as our male counterparts, and it is high time that we start being treated as such.”

Leading the way and setting the trend for female emancipation, women in law have, over the decades, made great contributions to the legal profession. However, stories of triumph always come with tales of strife and hardship. And in a society like ours that is still far from breaking free from its patriarchal shackles, without significant systemic changes in the legal workplace, the stairway to success will continue to be tremendously steep for those young women who aspire to be great lawyers.

*Names have been changed upon request.



NOTICE BOARD



Daffodil International University hosts three-day “Full Consortium Meeting 2025” of the Erasmus+ SQUARES Project

Daffodil International University (DIU) hosted the “Full Consortium Meeting 2025” of the Erasmus+ SQUARES Project, co-funded by the European Union, in Dhaka from January 28 to 30. Delegates from Italy, Estonia, Poland, Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Pakistan joined the event to discuss the project updates and share best practices of skills in education and academic quality. At the beginning of day one, the event started with the inauguration ceremony in presence of the Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellor, relevant academic experts of DIU, project coordinator,

delegates from project partners, and more.

The SQUARES – Sustainability and Quality Assurance for Academic Governance and Redesign Engineering Studies – Project from Erasmus+ CBHE KA2 aims to address skill gaps between higher education institutions, industries, and the job market in Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan by introducing transversal skills in energy, civil, and industrial engineering as well as enhancing quality management systems for course development and institutional management.

IUB hosts 1st Bangladesh National Round of the Stetson International Environmental Moot Court Competition 2024-25

The 1st Bangladesh National Round of the Stetson International Environmental Moot Court Competition 2024-25 took place from January 23 to 25, 2025, at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB). Hearth Bangladesh and IUB's School of Law jointly organised the competition, bringing together 34 universities to engage in advocacy on environmental law.

The final round featured Dhaka University (DU) and East West University (EWU), with DU emerging as the champion. Taposhi Rabeya from DU was named the “Best Mooter (Final)”, and Mahir Chowdhury Abir from Eastern University earned the “Best Mooter (All Over)” title. IUB secured a place among the top eight teams. The semi-finalists included DU, Chittagong University, EWU, and Eastern University.

The final round was judged by Justice Shamim Hasnain, Member of the Law Commission, Bangladesh, and Justice J B M Hassan and Justice Zafar Ahmed, both judges of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh.

During her keynote speech at the inaugural ceremony, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Adviser to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, and the Ministry of Water Resources, said, “I wanted to practice law but did not want to ask money from people. My work at BELA – Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association – has allowed me to practice law and reach communities without access to other lawyers. Whatever we do for our living, we must respect the natural equilibrium, avoiding



contamination of soil, water, and air. If you prepare for challenging times by learning from the mistakes of the past, the future will not be as unsafe.”

Prof. M Tamim, Vice-Chancellor of IUB, said, “This competition creates opportunities for networking, peer learning, and forming bonds that last beyond the event. It is a platform to share experiences that books cannot provide. Participants also benefit from interactions with real judges, gaining unique insights into the legal profession.”

The event concluded with a closing ceremony attended by Vice-Chancellor Prof. Tamim, Prof. Dr Mohammad Nazmuzzaman Bhuiyan, Dean of the School of Law at IUB, and Porob Naser Siddique, Executive Director of Hearth Bangladesh. Prof. Bhuiyan emphasised the competition's role in building professional competence and awareness of environmental law.

Dr Md Sabur Khan receives Honorary Doctorate from NIMS University

Dr Md Sabur Khan, Founder and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Daffodil International University (DIU), has been conferred an Honorary Doctorate Degree by NIMS University, Jaipur, India, during a special convocation ceremony held on January 27, 2025. The award was presented in recognition of Dr Khan's outstanding contributions to education, entrepreneurship, and leadership on a global scale.

The convocation ceremony was attended by distinguished dignitaries, including Dr Fernando Leon-Garcia, President of CETYS University, Mexico, Dr Kakha



Shengelia, President of Caucasus University, Georgia, and Prof. Dr Balvir S Tomar, Founder and Chairman of NIMS University.

Dr Khan was acknowledged for his visionary approach to transforming higher education in Bangladesh and beyond, as well as his role in fostering international collaboration and innovation in academia. He has served as the President of the Association of Universities of Asia and the Pacific (AUAP) for 2023-2024. Currently, he holds several significant positions, including

Chairman of the Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh (APUB), Treasurer-Elect and Member of the Standing Committee of the International Association of University Presidents (IAUP), and Chairman of the Advisory Council of AUAP.

In his acceptance speech, Dr Khan expressed his gratitude to NIMS University and its Board of Governors for the recognition.

“This recognition is not only a personal milestone but also a testament to the collective efforts of Daffodil International University in driving innovation, entrepreneurship, and excellence in education,” said Dr Khan.

The Honorary Doctorate adds to Dr Khan's long list of accolades and further solidifies his reputation as a global leader in education and innovation.

NIMS University is one of India's leading institutions of higher education, renowned for its commitment to academic excellence, research, and innovation. Located in Jaipur, Rajasthan, NIMS University provides a diverse range of programmes and is recognised for fostering impactful contributions to society.



DESIGN: ABIR HOSSAIN

STUDY ABROAD

A guide to the Chevening Scholarships for Law students

MAHAPARA SANJANA

The Chevening Scholarship is one of the most prestigious scholarships funded by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), with an acceptance rate of less than three percent. The scholarship covers everything, from tuition fees to living expenses. As it is an incredibly competitive scholarship, it has a unique eligibility criterion.

An aspiring applicant will need to have an undergraduate degree that qualifies them to pursue a postgraduate degree at a UK university, two years of work experience, and be a citizen of a Commonwealth country. A successful applicant will also need to possess and show the following excellent leadership capabilities: great networking skills, a clear career plan, and two references attesting to their potential to complete a challenging degree in the UK.

Start early and strategically

When I look back on my journey from an aspiring applicant to a current Chevening scholar, the first thing I go back to is how early I had started my preparations.

Chevening applications normally open in August and close in November. I started working on my essays and getting in touch with my referees in June 2023. Prior to that, for a year, I focused on enhancing my resume to ensure that my professional and academic experiences aligned with Chevening's core values of leadership, networking, and career development. I began taking up more voluntary leadership roles within my university as an MUN mentor, a mooted coach, and a member of the self-assessment committee for curriculum development. I made sure that I had a clear career plan to work with when applying because that is one of the most important things to know as an aspiring Chevening scholar.

Crafting a strong professional profile

Chevening places a strong emphasis on professional achievements and leadership potential. As a Law student, I had the advantage of doing internships at both local law firms and legal aid organisations. However, what stood out in my application was my teaching experience, and my commitment to legal education reform and innovative teaching strategies as an educator. This experience demonstrated my ability to inspire and mentor others, a trait Chevening highly values.

Articulating your vision

Your career-plan essay is the heart of your application. For Law students, it's essential to demonstrate how your expertise can address pressing legal issues or contribute to policy reforms in your home country. In my case, I focused on my passion for human rights law. I highlighted my work with a

non-governmental organisation that provided legal aid to marginalised communities, explaining how this experience shaped my commitment to social justice.

I also outlined my aspiration to influence legal education in Bangladesh by introducing more practical and interdisciplinary approaches. Remember, specificity is key; avoid vague statements and back your claims with concrete examples.

The value of academic and extracurricular achievements

While professional experience is crucial, academic excellence is equally important for aspiring Chevening scholars. If you have achievements like having academic publications, research and teaching experience, and experience with moot court competitions, make sure to highlight them. Extracurricular activities, such as volunteering or participating in pro bono initiatives, can also set you apart. Work experience does not mean full-time work; it can be voluntary, part-time, or even internship experience.

Preparing for the interview

The Chevening interview is your chance to bring your application to life. I approached it as a conversation – essentially a dialogue between intellectuals as opposed to an interview where I am getting grilled.

To prepare, I reviewed my essays thoroughly and practised articulating my responses to common questions about leadership, networking, and career goals. I also prepared specific anecdotes to illustrate my points, ensuring they were concise yet impactful.

Key tip: be authentic. Chevening is looking for individuals who are not only accomplished but also deeply motivated to create meaningful change, so let your passion shine through.

Final thoughts

As a Law student, your unique perspective on justice and governance can make a significant impact. Start early, stay focused, and believe in the value of your journey. One really important thing that helped me was knowing exactly which field I would be contributing to in my home country after completing my studies in the UK.

Also, most applicants make the mistake of making their essays too personal and don't paint a picture with examples and anecdotes of professional leadership and networking narratives.

It is imperative to have a coherent link throughout all four of your essays. You need to ensure that your essays tell the story of who you are, what your aspirations are, how you plan to give back to your country and community, and why you would be an asset to the Chevening community.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mahapara Sanjana is a Chevening scholar and human rights defender with a passion for social justice and legal education reform. She is currently pursuing an MA in Social Justice and Education at the University of York in the UK with a Chevening Scholarship.

Mahapara completed her Bachelor of Laws from BRAC University. Soon after graduating, she joined the legal aid and policy sector and worked in legal aid and development for a couple of years. She then proceeded to do her first masters in the UK and after coming back, she started teaching Law at Southeast University. She is currently on study leave from Southeast University pursuing her second masters in the UK as a Chevening scholar.

With experience in legal research, teaching, and advocacy, Mahapara aims to empower marginalised communities and influence educational policy change in her home country. When she is not immersed in research and drowning in schoolwork, she can be found mentoring aspiring Law students and exploring intersectional and interdisciplinary approaches to legal challenges.

Apart from being a scholar, lawyer, and academic, Mahapara also dabbles in fire-spinning, DJing, poetry, perfumery, and contemporary dance.



STUDY ABROAD

Navigating the UK undergraduate admission process

MAHPARA FAATIN

Applying to universities abroad can be an intimidating process, especially when aiming for the United Kingdom. While guides for applying to the US are abundant, information on the UK system can be harder to find. To help you navigate the process, here's a comprehensive guide to applying for undergraduate studies in the UK.

Researching courses and universities

The first step is to decide which course and university best align with your academic interests, career goals, and personal preferences. The UK offers a wide range of undergraduate courses, from traditional fields like medicine and law to niche areas like bioengineering and philosophy. For each university, you apply to a specific course and your profile is assessed against the requirements for admission to that course.

Research is crucial. Consider factors such as course content, teaching style, tuition fees, university rankings, and campus culture. Platforms like YouTube are excellent for understanding the environment and facilities.

Understanding the requirements

Each university has its own requirements like minimum grades and entrance exams such as the Law National Aptitude Test (LNAT) or Biomedical Admissions Test (BMAT), etc. All this information is available on individual university websites under each specific course. Some universities require you to attend interviews to personally assess your academic capabilities and most require English proficiency test scores if you choose to get admitted. The interviews are usually conducted after you have already submitted your application.

How to apply

Undergraduate admissions in the UK are managed through the Universities and Colleges

Admissions Service (UCAS) – a system similar to the US Common Application. For a fee of GBP 28.50, you can only apply to a maximum of five universities. However, you cannot apply to both University of Oxford and University of Cambridge in the same undergraduate admission cycle. The website itself is very helpful and provides all the resources to help you complete your application.

Compared to the US Common Application, the application process on UCAS is pretty straightforward. Start by creating an account, filling in personal details, and entering your grades. A key component is the personal statement – a 4000-character essay where you explain why you wish to study your chosen subject and demonstrate how you have already pursued it through extra-curricular activities like research, internships, external reading, etc. It's important to craft a compelling and authentic narrative that demonstrates your enthusiasm for the subject and your suitability for the course.

The UCAS essay is very different from the Common Application personal essay where you talk about who you are as a person. This focus is because UK universities admit students to specific courses, and switching majors later is typically not allowed.

Lastly, you'll also need to invite a teacher or academic mentor to write a reference, providing an evaluation of your abilities and giving context to your educational background. Note that UCAS does not require financial documents or details about other extracurricular activities.

The financial aspect

Tuition fees differ based on your course and your nationality. For instance, STEM courses for

international students always have the highest fees. Full scholarships for international undergraduate students are rare and highly competitive. However, there are some small awards which you can usually find under a university's "scholarship finder" website.

The timeline

Most UK undergraduate courses start in September, so applications typically begin a year earlier. If you're completing your final school exams (for instance, A

Research is crucial. Consider factors such as course content, teaching style, tuition fees, university rankings, and campus culture. Platforms like YouTube are excellent for understanding the environment and facilities.

Levels) in June 2025 and plan to start university without a gap year, you can open your UCAS account and start your application from May 2024. You can then start submitting from the beginning of September 2024.

The deadline for applications to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and for most courses in Medicine, Dentistry, and Veterinary is October 15. The deadline for most other universities is January 29. However, entrance exams often have earlier registration deadlines, so check these in advance.

Decisions for Oxford and Cambridge are typically released by mid-January, while other universities aim to notify applicants from late March to mid-May and some admit students on a rolling

basis. Unlike the US, where all decisions are announced on a fixed date, UK universities respond within eight to ten weeks of receiving your application. If you don't receive any offers, UCAS offers options like "Extra" or "Clearing" where you can apply to courses with available vacancies. Offers can be either 'unconditional' or 'conditional', in which case you will have to fulfil certain criteria to secure admission. So, make sure to read your offer letter properly.

Final advice: start early.

Do your research, contact your recommender, and work hard to meet the admission requirements.

With the right preparation, you can look forward to a rewarding academic experience in the UK.



ILLUSTRATION: ADRITA ZAIMA ISLAM