



Award winners, along with guests and dignitaries, pose for a photograph at the "EBL Climate Change Action Awards 2025," organised by Eastern Bank PLC in partnership with the German, French, and Danish embassies in Bangladesh, held at InterContinental Dhaka on February 27, 2025. Photo: Star



## DR. CHASHI Revolutionising agriculture through AI

SARAH BINTAY SHAKHAWAT

Dr. Chashi is Bangladesh's first comprehensive digital agriculture platform, empowering farmers, gardeners, and agro-dealers with AI-driven tools to optimise crop health, boost yields, and promote environmental sustainability. By integrating AI-powered disease detection, weather-indexed advisory systems, and scalable solutions, Dr. Chashi reduces chemical dependency, lowers input costs, and increases productivity by up to 30%. The platform also provides e-commerce access to climate-resilient inputs and ensures food traceability to meet global standards.

Founded in 2020 by Medina Ali, an entrepreneur with deep roots in Bangladesh's agro-industry, Dr. Chashi was inspired by her family's 45+ years of experience in the sector. Identifying critical gaps in real-time crop health diagnostics and effective product usage, Medina launched the platform at a time when farmers were struggling with unpredictable weather, rising input costs,



and environmental degradation.

Dr. Chashi aims to transform farming practices by providing data-driven solutions that align with national and global climate goals, including Bangladesh's climate

change strategies and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With a vision to lead the global Agro Tech industry, the platform promotes sustainable agriculture, mitigates environmental impacts, and enhances food security. Today, Dr. Chashi has over 15,000 organic users and partnerships with organisations such as USAID, the Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture (BINA), and Genetica Industries Ltd. The platform has helped reduce crop losses by over 20%, improved soil fertility, and increased farmers' profitability through precise dosage recommendations and early disease detection.

Looking ahead, Dr. Chashi plans to expand into coastal regions to address salinity issues and promote climate-resilient aquaculture. The platform also aims to integrate IoT devices for enhanced monitoring and real-time data collection, introduce microfinance solutions to support smallholder farmers, and develop weather-indexed crop insurance to mitigate financial risks caused by climate change.

In Bangladesh, bumper harvests often lead to oversupply, low prices, and wasted crops due to limited storage and processing facilities. A major challenge is the lack of agricultural data, making it difficult to predict market demand and optimise production. Dr. Chashi bridges this gap by collecting real-time farmland and crop data, helping farmers make informed decisions. With AI-driven fertiliser recommendations, disease detection, and early warning systems, farmers can optimise yields, reduce losses, and increase profitability while preserving their expertise.

MEDINA ALI, Founder and CEO, Dr Chashi Incorporation

## JOLER CHOBI MATIR CHOBI Curating a transformative festival

MUJIB RAHMAN

A festival is more than just a cultural event—it is a powerful agent of change. Joler Chobi Matir Chobi, a pioneering travelling film festival, redefines the role of cinema by seamlessly integrating disaster management with community-driven development. Through compelling storytelling, it fosters awareness, resilience, and action in regions most vulnerable to climate change.

Targeting wetlands, coastal belts, and the Chittagong Hill Tracts—areas facing extreme environmental threats—the festival sparks critical conversations, amplifies local voices, and mobilises collective action. By blending cinema with scientific discourse and grassroots participation, it translates complex climate challenges into relatable narratives, encouraging deeper community engagement.

Like all effective development initiatives, this festival maximises impact by incorporating local knowledge and addressing the everyday struggles of vulnerable communities. Rooted in both global and local climate adaptation and disaster management frameworks, it aligns itself with regional challenges, exploring feasible solutions while emphasising cost-effectiveness.

Beyond being a model for climate

education, the festival fosters meaningful collaboration and grassroots driven approaches. Its replicable nature ensures that it can be adapted across diverse settings, nurturing trusted local leadership, strengthening institutional capacity, and enhancing disaster preparedness.

With support from the U.S. Department of State and local film networks, this festival is rapidly growing, extending its reach into



new regions and amplifying its impact. Far from being an external intervention, it operates as a dynamic, participatory platform that brings together filmmakers, climate scientists, activists, and media partners. By engaging communities that are often hesitant to participate in development initiatives, the festival fosters a sense of ownership, facilitating long-term change and resilience-building in climate-affected regions.

**I prioritise introspection over prescription when portraying affected communities. While filming in a remote coastal district, we found residents eager to participate. When we later screened the film, they deeply connected with its depiction. It's encouraging to see Hollywood embracing climate narratives, as exemplified by Don't Look Up. COP 30 in Brazil is set to highlight culture's role in climate action. Recently appointed to the UN Climate Change Secretariat's Film/TV Steering Committee, I aim to shape global disaster management policies.**

REZWAN SHAHRIAR SUMIT, Producer at MyPixelStory

## BRAC MICROFINANCE Securing a climate-smart Bangladesh



AYMAN ANIKA

Bangladesh faces severe climate challenges, with rising temperatures, unpredictable rainfall, and frequent natural disasters threatening livelihoods. BRAC Microfinance has introduced innovative solutions that integrate financial security with climate-smart strategies to support vulnerable communities. To safeguard livelihoods, BRAC Microfinance introduced climate-focused microinsurance products like Area Yield Index Insurance (AYII) and Weather Index Insurance (WII), protecting farmers from droughts, floods, and erratic weather. The Livestock Grow initiative extends similar security to livestock farmers, covering risks from diseases and natural disasters. Currently piloted in 200 branches, it is set for national expansion.

BRAC Microfinance is also promoting climate-resilient seeds, solar-powered irrigation, and precision farming to mitigate climate risks and enhance food security. Partnering with Haor farmers and Sundarbans fishermen, it has introduced modern harvesting tools and storage facilities, reducing post-harvest losses. Solar-powered irrigation pumps have decreased

reliance on fossil fuels, making farming more sustainable.

Through initiatives like Green Inception and Green Expansion, BRAC Microfinance has planted over a million trees in climate-vulnerable regions. This afforestation drive conserves biodiversity and aligns with Bangladesh's National Biodiversity Strategy and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), combating deforestation and land degradation.

BRAC Microfinance's initiatives have insured 400,000 farmers, with BDT 4.8 crore in payouts, leading to a 20-30 percent increase in crop yields and a 40 percent reduction in harvest losses. Solar-powered irrigation has lowered farmers' energy costs by 60 percent, while thousands of palm trees now shield coastal areas from erosion.

Looking ahead, BRAC Microfinance aims to develop 100,000 climate-smart livestock entrepreneurs annually, enrol 1 million farmers in climate food insurance, introduce Aqua Insurance for fish farmers, expand smart farming solutions using data-driven technologies, and establish community-led storage units to reduce food waste and stabilise markets.

Bangladesh ranks as the seventh most vulnerable country to climate change, with its agriculture, biodiversity, and livelihoods increasingly disrupted. Frequent natural disasters pose severe threats, while climate-induced migration has become a survival strategy as people lose climate-sensitive jobs due to low adaptive capacity. Our initiatives focus on climate-adaptive technology, biodiversity conservation, and resilience-building measures, including microinsurance, mechanisation, post-harvest storage, adaptive seeds, and tailored financing. Over three years, we've insured nearly 500,000 farmers, aiming to reach one million this year.

ARINJOY DHAR, Senior Director of BRAC Microfinance

