

Why we should have a planetarium in every division



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On a clear evening in a small town in Bangladesh, a child stands outside and looks up at the sky. The stars are visible, scattered across the darkness. She wonders what they are. Are there worlds beyond them? Has anyone from her country ever touched that sky? She returns home with curiosity but without answers. In the division where she lives, there is no planetarium, no observatory, no space museum where imagination meets explanation. Without exposure to such tools, how can she dream or imagine? And without such tools, how can a nation create scientists?

Planetariums are not luxury entertainment halls. They are scientific classrooms. When the lights fade, the domed ceiling transforms into a galaxy, and a narrator explains the mysteries of the universe in simple language. Students travel through the solar system without leaving their seats. Interactive science exhibits allow children to experiment with gravity, light, and motion. Telescopes offer real-time views of the moon's craters. Space museums display models of rockets, satellites, and planetary systems. Through these, science no longer remains abstract; it becomes tangible, exciting, and human.

Dhaka has had a functioning planetarium since 2004. Rajshahi added one in 2023. The ones in Barishal and Rangpur are under development. But progress generally remains stalled. The Khulna project, though prepared earlier, was not carried forward. Chattogram, Sylhet, and Mymensingh still wait for initiatives that have not begun. For a nation of more than 170 million people and millions of school students, four functioning and/or



Ensuring children's access to planetariums can lead to greater interest in science and technology.

FILE PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

developing planetariums are not enough. Vast regions remain without access to scientific infrastructure that other countries consider essential.

Even most governments in our region treat science centres as long-term national investments. India operates more than two dozen major planetariums across its states. Many are directly supported by state science departments. Indian space agency programmes frequently collaborate with

these institutions to inspire school students. India's annual space budget is estimated at over \$1.5 billion, and its achievements now include lunar landings and Mars missions. These accomplishments did not begin in laboratories alone; they began with generations of students inspired by science education via public outreach.

Malaysia maintains its National Planetarium under its science ministry

something fundamental: scientific curiosity must be cultivated deliberately and nationally.

Globally, space research and astronomy are no longer symbolic pursuits. The US has allocated around \$25 billion this year for NASA. China invests heavily in lunar exploration and space stations. The United Arab Emirates, once without a space presence, successfully sent a probe to Mars' orbit in 2021.

Despite Bangladesh launching a communications satellite, national research and development spending remains a small fraction of GDP. Without consistent investment in science literacy and inspiration, talent risks remaining dormant. A scientific society is not built overnight; it is nurtured through institutions that encourage and satisfy curiosity.

Consider what a divisional planetarium could mean in Khulna, Sylhet, or Chattogram. A student from a coastal district might see a simulation of climate systems and decide to study environmental science. A teenager from the CHT might watch a presentation on astrophysics and choose physics as his major. A school group visiting an observatory might witness Jupiter's moons through a telescope and realise that astronomy is not distant mythology, but a measurable reality. These are not hypothetical transformations. In Rajshahi, teachers have reported increased interest in science fairs and astronomy clubs following the opening of its planetarium.

A modern divisional planetarium would include a full-dome digital projection theatre capable of displaying immersive space journeys, a science gallery filled with interactive exhibits, a simulation theatre presenting planetary exploration experiences, and a rooftop observatory for live skywatching. Adjacent facilities could house a space museum explaining satellite technology, conducting robotics demonstrations for students, and have lecture halls to host science workshops. Schools would schedule regular visits. Parents would bring children along on the

weekends. Thus, science can become a part of public culture.

The issue today is not a lack of design but a lack of continuity. With the Dhaka and Rajshahi planetariums operational, and after the projects in Barishal and Rangpur began, the momentum slowed. Khulna's prepared project was not advanced further. The ones in Chattogram, Sylhet, and Mymensingh remain without concrete steps. The current government has the opportunity to restore this focus. Reviving the Khulna project would signal commitment to regional equity for scientific access. Initiating new development proposals for the remaining divisions would also demonstrate long-term planning beyond short-term priorities.

Equally important is constant engagement and improvement. Planetariums must actively partner with schools, offer subsidised access to students, organise astronomy nights, host science festivals, and promote programmes through media campaigns. When parents understand the value of scientific exposure, participation grows. When teachers integrate these visits into coursework, curiosity deepens. When young people see their peers presenting robotics projects under the same dome that displays distant galaxies, their own ambition feels attainable.

But how can young people dream of exploring space if they have never seen it properly explained? How can they aspire to become astronomers, engineers, or researchers if there is no place in their region that makes scientific knowledge attainable? A planetarium in every division does not mean extravagance, but rather an investment in knowledge expansion and critical thinking. It will mean preparing for a world increasingly shaped by science and technology.

When a child steps under a planetarium dome and sees the universe unfold, something shifts. The sky is no longer distant. It becomes reachable. And nations that help their children reach for the stars find themselves rising with them.

Interactive Cares and the recurring crisis of trust in startups



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On April 28, immigration police detained Rare Al Samir, founder and CEO of the Dhaka-based edtech platform Interactive Cares, at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, as he attempted to leave the country. Both he and his wife were detained by the immigration police after a formal case was filed against them by several of the startup's investors and former employees. Later, on May 13, a Dhaka court placed the duo on a three-day remand, following a second criminal case being filed on charges of fraud and criminal breach of trust.

Investors alleged embezzlement and money laundering, with the total owed reportedly exceeding Tk 10 crore. Current and former employees said salaries have gone unpaid for months. However, Samir denied the allegations and said everyone would be paid within a month or two. Six months ago, the same founder was the subject of a glowing profile in a prominent national daily, framed as a visionary bridging academia and industry, with 150,000 learners reportedly empowered and 130-plus corporate partnerships. In 2023, Interactive Cares was the only Bangladeshi startup selected for the Accelerating Asia cohort, raising some Tk 1.2 crore. The glowing profile and the recent detention are not in contradiction, but part of the same system running on schedule.

Allegations are not convictions, but the case has already damaged trust in Bangladesh's startup ecosystem that no verdict can fully reverse it.

In September 2021, founders of e-commerce platform Evaly were arrested on charges of embezzlement, with the company's liabilities to customers and merchants estimated at over Tk 500 crore. Around the same period, the owners of e-orange were jailed in a fraud case involving roughly Tk 1,100

crore. Dhamaka Shopping faced parallel allegations of laundering Tk 117 crore. These were not fringe operators, but household names advertised on cricket jerseys and celebrated in the same media that later struggled to explain how it had missed the warning signs.

Chaldal, the country's pioneering online grocery, belongs to a different category, and it is important to say so clearly. Founded in 2013 and backed by Y Combinator, Chaldal is not accused of fraud. It is facing a liquidity crisis. Earlier this year, hundreds of Chaldal employees in Jashore Software Technology Park protested over three to four months of unpaid wages. Anticipated foreign investment did not materialise and support from the national startup fund did not come through. The workforce was cut from 3,300 to about 2,200. The company formally sought emergency bridge financing for a Tk 40 crore working capital shortfall. Founder Waseem Alim said the company had never missed a salary in its first 12 years.

That distinction matters legally and morally. It does not matter much to the employee who has not paid rent in three months, or to the investor whose capital is locked in a company that may or may not survive the year. From where they sit, the experience of fraud and that of stress feel similar.

In the startup ecosystem, trust moves in two directions that nobody talks about together. Investors fear founders who burn capital and disappear. Founders fear investors who exploit the moment a company stumbles. When a founder is vulnerable, the standard move is not to support them through it, but to take a larger stake for a smaller cheque. So founders learn to hide the cash crunch, project confidence, and keep the optics polished even when the substance is collapsing.

An ecosystem that makes it dangerous for founders to admit difficulty and tempting for investors to extract will keep producing collapses, whether the cause is criminal or structural.

Then there is the celebration machine that sits on top of all of it. At every layer, the incentive is to amplify the story of a startup and never to ask the harder questions: where are the audited financials? Are salaries actually being paid? Is the growth real or narrated? The earlier profile is not a journalistic failure in isolation. It is the natural output of a system in which everyone benefits from the rise and nobody is paid to look closely.

Evaly cracked the surface in 2021. Chaldal stressed it in early 2026. Interactive Cares is the line we just crossed. The cost is not measured in the Tk 10 crore that may or may not be recovered. The cost is in what happens next. A young entrepreneur in Khulna trying to raise a first round of funding next month will show up to investors who are now warier, more extractive, and more inclined to assume the worst. A genuine edtech founder building something honest will face learners who have decided that online courses are a scam. An investor who would have written a clean cheque may now write a punishing one, or none at all.

Real accountability in the startup ecosystem would mean investors agreeing to non-extractive bridge norms when founders surface problems early and accelerators publishing follow-on data on their portfolios, not just induction announcements. It would mean the media investing in due diligence before profiles, and in follow-up afterwards. It would mean founders building peer accountability structures so that nobody is alone with a cash crunch and a dwindling sense of options. It would mean having a regulatory environment that distinguishes between a founder who failed honestly and one who did not.

The alternative is a fragile system turning brittle, in public, again. The collapse of one startup is never about just itself or its founders. It has always been about whether we are willing to build something worth trusting. That question is still being asked.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Snoozes
- 5 Church leader
- 9 Della's boss
- 10 Isolated
- 12 — a limb
- 13 Pine product
- 14 Be an omen
- 16 Corp.'s superior
- 17 Hole number
- 18 Speculate
- 20 Milano of TV
- 22 General Bradley

DOWN

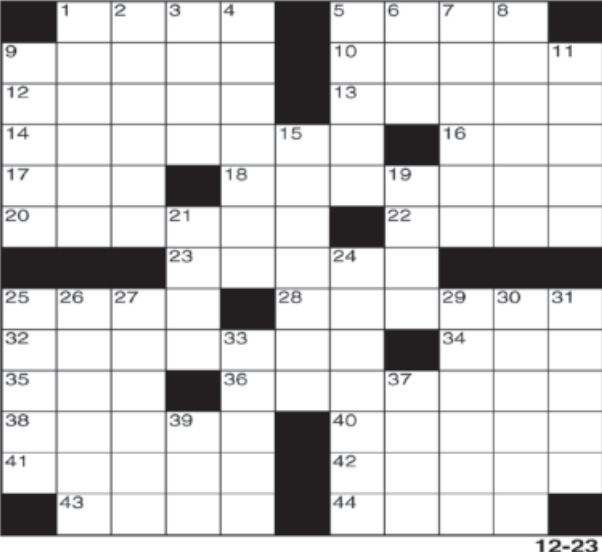
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- 25 Bar mixer
- 28 Riviera nation
- 32 Washing machine cycle
- 34 Gangland gun
- 35 Flock father
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- 38 Be penitent
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- 41 Wyoming's — Range
- 42 Birch's kin
- 43 Uses a needle

44 Blue hue

- 1 Kind of network
- 2 Blood line
- 3 Debate group
- 4 Transmission gap
- 5 "Gay" city of song
- 6 Bullring cry
- 7 American marsupial
- 8 Puzzle
- 9 Momma's mate
- 11 Door sign

15 Language topic

- 19 Shortly
- 21 RR stops
- 24 Probed with a stick
- 25 Small herring
- 26 Speaks
- 27 Reduce in rank
- 29 Meeting slate
- 30 Make void
- 31 Mink's cousin
- 33 Some tourneys
- 37 Store event
- 39 At this moment



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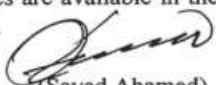
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1	Tender ID: 1273762 Ref: JnU/Zoology/Research Equipment/Purchase/14/103 Procurement of Research Equipment for the Department of Zoology, Jagannath University, Dhaka-1100.	11-May-2026 14:00 PM	21-May-2026 14:00 PM	21-May-2026 14:30 PM	21-May-2026 15:00 PM

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