

Sing for the UNSUNG

The Daily Star - IPDC initiative brings seven women change-makers under the spotlight



Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu, *third from left*, AKM Shahidul Hoque, inspector general of police, *second from left*, Parveen Mahmud, chairperson at the Micro Industries Development Assistance and Services (MIDAS), *left*, and Mominul Islam, IPDC Finance Ltd managing director and CEO, *third from right*, among the seven women who received The Daily Star-IPDC Unsung Women Nation Builders Awards at the Krishibid Institution Bangladesh yesterday evening.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sonajan Akter is not at all familiar with the razzle-dazzle of an award show. So, when she found glittering lights, grand decorations and loud sound at the capital's Krishibid Institution

Bangladesh last night, she looked a little surprised.

The 68-year old midwife from Manikganj, who has selflessly been providing prenatal and postnatal care in her locality for the last 50 years, could only say she felt good for her award.

"I came here just the way I respond to the calls from pregnant mothers in need of care," she said shortly before receiving the "Unsung Women Nation Builders Awards" at the packed auditorium of the KIB near Farmgate.

For serving pregnant women and

newborns, Sonajan does not receive any payment. She also volunteers to wash the bodies of deceased women before burial.

IPDC Finance Limited in association with The Daily Star presented the SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Bhagya Rani Banik

Woman of green

When she became the director general of BRRI in June 2016, Bhagya Rani Banik was the first woman to hold that post. She graduated from Sher-e- Bangla Agricultural University and joined Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) in 1983. Ms Banik earned her PhD from Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Irani Baroi

An indomitable soul

Even though her legs became paralysed, Irani Baroi did not give up her mission of helping the sick. Irani is a senior nurse today at the 100-bed general hospital in Madaripur. She earned her diploma in Nursing from Dhaka Medical College and Hospital in 1986 and started her career in Madaripur General Hospital. She came SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Fatema Begum

First female police officer

First woman police officer and additional inspector general of police Fatema Begum is one of the first two women who chose to join the police service after their Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) exam in 1984. The other quitted soon but she continues to serve in the police and became the first woman to become an SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Rokeya Begum

Blindness no bar to teaching

Rokeya Begum, who became blind at the age of 3, is an assistant teacher of Tambulkhana govt primary school. Her indomitable spirit has brought her to this position. She teaches like any regular teacher. Moreover, she is a popular teacher. She had to struggle to be here today. Her father Sheikh Mujibur Rahaman SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Sonajan

Selfless midwife

Sonajan of Chowbaria at Manikganj has been serving as a midwife for the entire village as well as at least 15 other villages for the past 50 years. The sixty-eight-year-old does not accept any payment for her services despite her family being extremely poor. She takes care of the mothers, and later, their babies, for up to 10 days SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Maftahul Jannat Likhon

The light of Joypurhat

Because Maftahul Jannat Likhon decided to install solar panels free of charge in three villages two years back, students from the poorest families can now study at night in these villages of Joypurhat's Panchbibbi upazila. When many people would leave empty handed from her solar power sales center because of the high SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Shahida Akhter Shorna

Malala of Bangla

For her work against child marriage, Shahida Akhter Shorna was dubbed the 'Malala of Bangla' by Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg at an international conference of Plan International, an organisation that works for children's rights worldwide. Shorna endured pressure for early marriage like all the other girls in her SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Woman of green

FROM PAGE 1

Agriculture University in 2003. She has significant contribution in food sufficiency and climate change research.

Under her leadership BRRI has achieved international success. She has contributed in developing better breed of corn. She has 37 research articles published in national and international scientific journals.