

The Vice Chancellor of North South University, Dr. Hafiz G A Siddiqi and the Convenor of the event, Zunaed Rabbani listen to the Chief Advisor, Fakhdruddin Ahmed, rendering his opening speech at the inauguration ceremony of the event.

An Asian Congregation

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The team could feel the anxiety building up inside them. Even though the blood was rushing from head to toe and then the other way around again, the team players could not let their guards down. They had to go on with the game, stay cool and think clearly about how to make the next attack. As the team leader stepped forward with a rebuttal, the players were seen trying to gather up all the strength and confidence they had between themselves and silently cheer their leader on. Nobody could miss the gestures made with their eyes, their modulating voice and the spontaneous hand movements. Both the teams would fight till the very end, till the judges would decide their fate. At the 15th All Asians Intervarsity Debate Championship 2008, this was an everyday scene between the sixty-six teams that had come from all over Asia to compete with each other.

Commonly known as the 'Asians', the All Asian Intervarsity Debating Championship is the largest and the most prestigious debate tournament held in Asia. Also the third largest coveted international tournament in the world, debaters and debating associations from all over the Asian nations participate in this competition. This year, this tournament was held for the very first time in Bangladesh, where at least 450 participants flew in from twenty different Asian nations namely, China, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea, India, Thailand, Singapore, Macau, Chinese Taipei, India, Pakistan and many more.

"The tournament went on for one week," says Zunaed Rabbani, the convenor of the Asians. "However, we have been preparing for it for more than two years. It was an extremely difficult task, especially since it was to happen for the very first time in Bangladesh." A regular debater at his education institutions, St. Joseph's, Notre Dame and North South University, Zunaed has had the opportunity to participate in the World Debates and also the Asians. Former president of the North South University Debating Club, Zunaed and his team describes the pain they had to take to firstly convince the 'hot-shot' institutions and debaters in India, Pakistan, Thailand and other countries to let them hold the Asians in Bangladesh. "In 2005, we spoke to representatives in India and Pakistan," he says. "Even though lots of debate tournaments are held between the institutions in India and Pakistan, they did not want to get into the hassles of organising an Asian. Next, in 2006, where the Asian was taking place in Lankavi, (Malaysia) we went as a participating team and bid for the next tournament to be held in Dhaka. We lost the