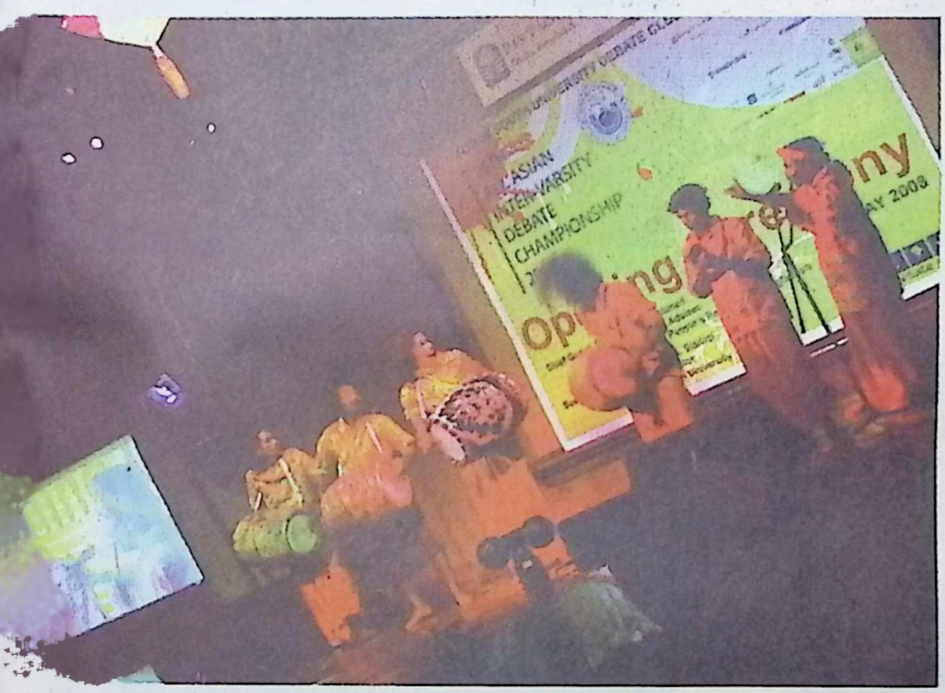
bid to South Korea, however, it was a good experience for us. The next year in South Korea, we won the bid for the Asian to be held in Dhaka in 2008. It was a wonderful moment for us when we won it!"

They had to answer a lot of inane questions. A Chinese asked if it would be safe to walk on the streets of Bangladesh, since tigers roamed about the cities freely. Another asked how they planned to hold such a huge event under water since Bangladesh would obviously be flooded all throughout the year. "We had answered all the questions with a lot of patience!" remembers Zunaed. "However, after the tournament, the debaters, academicians and the judges who had flown in from all over Asia had a completely different idea about the country." The tournament was inaugurated by the Chief Advisor Fakhruddin Ahmed at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon and the closing was held at the China Friendship Centre, where advisor to the Ministry of Education, Hossain Zillur Rahman was present as the chief guest.

The aim of the ASIANS is to promote and expand the "art of debate" as a medium of international interaction among the Asian countries. "It is also a way of creating cultural exchange programmes between young students and established debaters from all over Asia," says Zunaed. ASIANS is not only a competition of debate, it is first and foremost, a congregation of the youth and future leaders from different parts of Asia. "In fact, this was the largest youth congregation ever held in Bangladesh," he says. ASIANS serves as the platform for the Asian youth community, where the superior brains of Asia can exchange their views about different Asian and international issues and thus enlighten and develop their minds.



Participants from all over Asia were given a taste of the Bangladeshi culture.

Previously, ASIANS has been hosted by reputed institutions such as Nan yang Technological University, Singapore; Chulalongkorn University, Thailand; Multimedia University, Malaysia; Chung Ang University, South Korea, etc. Along with the debating teams, each institution sent in their respective judges as well. A team form the United States had come to train some of the teams before getting into the tournament. This is the very first time that the grand tournament was held in South Asia, and that too in Bangladesh by North South University.

One of the highlights of the tournament was the Tab Software that was used to calculate and manage the numbers of debates taking place and the scores made by the debaters. "We flew in Dr. Alfred Snider from Vermont, USA to run this software at the tournament here," says Zunaed. Dr. Snider is the inventor of the Tab Software. Once the scores and numbers would be fed into the computer, the software would decide who would compete against whom, based on the capability of the competing teams. "It was like a chain reaction," says Asif Newaz, the deputy convenor. "The software would not work until all the judgements were fed in at a time. Only then would it come up with the results. This helped us to decide very quickly yet efficiently as well."

After an intense semi-final tournament between three teams from the National Law School, Bangalore and the Lahore University of Management Sciences, one of the teams from the National Law School, Bangalore won the Asian. "The National Law School, Bangalore had sent in five teams to the tournament," says Afreen Hussain, the tournament director. "Each team was extremely strong and focused." As per the Asian tradition and constitution, North South University being the host team, debaters from this institution could not participate in the tournament to maintain transparency and fair play. Amongst the nine participating institutions from Bangladesh, the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) made the rank.

Amidst several obstructions, pressures from institutions and organisations in Dhaka, these young debaters took the risk to organise an Asian in Dhaka, and that too for the very first time in South Asia. A huge step for the debaters and young thinkers in the country, this might have not meant much to the corporations and multinationals streaming in to the economy. However, this only proves that there exists the passion, hard work and brilliant young ideas to create something new and phenomenal in Bangladesh. All we need is a little support and encouragement from the government and the policy makers. ■