# HPAIR Academic Conference 2008

Md. Jalal Uddin

IT was a great pleasure and honour for me to represent Bangladesh to the HPAIR academic Conference 2008 held in Malaysia recently. Harvard Project for Asian and International Relations (HPAIR) is a partnership between the students and faculty of Harvard University, offering a sustained academic program and a forum of exchange to facilitate discussion of the most important economic, political, and social issues relevant to the Asia-Pacific region.

HPAIR was created in 1991 by three students of Harvard University. These three undergraduates crafted a vision of an organization that would bring together university students from around the world to exchange ideas on important international issues and build educational links among the world's future leaders. The realization of that vision was the first HPAIR conference, held in Taipei.

HPAIR's international conference has emerged as the largest annual Harvard event in Asia and the largest annual student conference in the Asia-Pacific region, attracting a wide variety of distinguished speakers and future leaders as Harvard's student outpost in Asia.

HPAIR has become a forum for building global understanding where current and future leaders meet and exchange ideas. For almost 20 years, Harvard Project for Asian and International Relations (HPAIR) has been the premier gathering place for students from around the globe as the largest student conference in Asia.

HPAIR has gained a reputation as one of the most visible university forums in the region, with the regular attendance of some of the world's most distinguished leaders.

Here, workshops include speeches and discussion, interactive projects and activities are framed by serious research. In addition to the workshops, plenary sessions, panels, workshops, and other events allow each conference to span a multitude of issues relevant to the Asia-Pacific region. By providing a platform for discussion, debate, and reflection between future and current leaders, HPAIR is a forum for building global understanding. Theme of this year's conference was 'Beyond Borders: Asia on the World Stage' and six workshops were held including Leadership, Economics, International Security, Social Policy, and Rule of Law.

Dhaka University HPAIR club is also a partnership organization of HPAIR officially recognized by the Harvard University authority. It aims to build up a platform for future leaders of Bangladesh and to promote the participation of Bangladesh in this global prestigious organization and facilitate discussion from our perspectives. The discussion on issues and policies more or less reaches the top policy making level in Bangladesh in particular and the Asia in general.

HPAIR academic conference 2008 took place at Hilton Petaling in Malaysia and more than 450 university students from 53 countries gathered to discuss important political, economic, and social issues that are facing the Asia Pacific region today.

We had to submit a written submission online in Harvard Student project to get selected and after many nail-biting hours of waiting I came to know that Muhibur Rahman and I, Md Jalal Uddin this year from Dhaka University, had been selected from a pool of highly competitive and talented 3000 applicants of top universities from all over the world.

This year, HPAIR's 17th Academic Conference 2008 focused on some of the most fascinating consequences of the technological change that had swept the globe in the previous decade, discussed strategies to bridge the digital divide, the impact of technology on health issues and Asian healthcare systems, the relevance of the "knowledge economy," and education in the information age, to provide students and academics with the opportunity to explore the new phenomenon of globalization.

The conference was opened by the Crown Prince of the state of Perak, Malaysia. His Royal Highness Raja Dr. Duli Yang Teramat Mulia Raja Nazrin Shah stated "With the world becoming a global village, and with national destinies more closely intertwined, a better understanding of each other's different perspectives will be crucial. For much will depend on what you and your generation do as you take your positions in society in later years. I am hopeful that many of you will attain high positions in society as each one of you has been endowed with gifts of intellectual and personal leadership."

The keynote address was delivered by Borje Ljunggren, Ambassador in the Asia Department of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ljunggren, at the beginning of the conference, said, "The education of tomorrow's leaders is vital in the knowledge economy. In order to excel, you will need to possess the potent combination of talent, creativity, innovation and entrepreneurial drive. Creating an environment that will foster these qualities is what is needed for the moulding of future entrepreneurs for Malaysia and the region. We are hopeful that the progress of our initiatives will put our students and graduates in good stead."