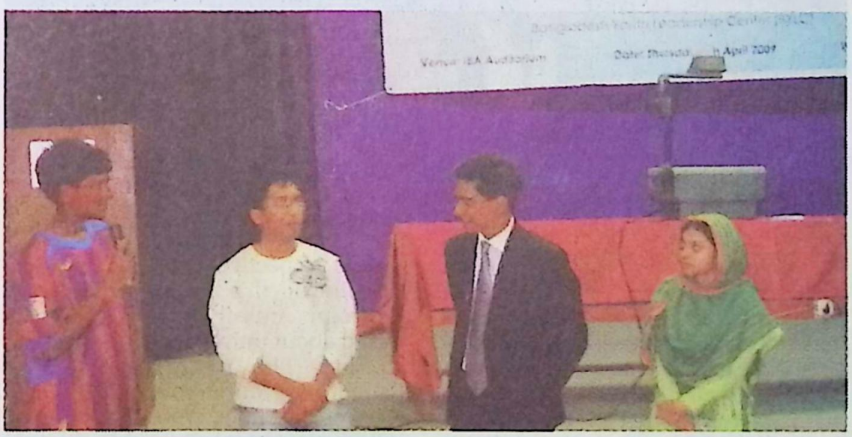
Exploring Real Leadership

BYLC holds lecture at IBA

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PETER F. Drucker once uttered the momentous words, *'Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things'*. Business schools entrusted with the duty of producing managers have a lot to learn from these words.

With the intention of promoting real leadership and inciting thoughtful contemplations in the young generation, the Bangladesh Youth Leadership Centre (BYLC) organized a lecture entitled 'Exercising Leadership' at the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), University of Dhaka, on 9 April 2009. Homayara



Ahmed, Lecturer of IBA, was the chief facilitator of the event. Ejaj Ahmad, a Harvard graduate, and founder and president of BYLC delivered the keynote address. Students of the BBA program of IBA and faculty members of IBA attended the event. Mr. Ifty Islam, founder and Managing Partner of AT Capital, was the special guest at the occasion.

It was not one of those lectures where the students could pass the time away playing the role of passive listeners. Rather, they were constantly urged to think out-of-the-box and challenge their deeply held assumptions. Even when it came to defining a concept as basic as leadership itself, Ejaj Ahmad demonstrated how our thinking is constrained by traditional modes of thinking. Finally, he revealed a definition that is adhered to at BYLC: '*Leadership is about disappointing people at a rate that they can absorb.*' This definition recognizes that real leaders, during the course of pursuing the change that they hope to lead in society, will inevitably disappoint others, as people generally do not like stepping out of their comfort zone. Gaining popularity and saying things that people want to hear is not always real leadership. Real leadership involves helping people face the difficult reality and engaging them to work through common goals and challenges to make progress. He also used several examples from the classroom itself to challenge students to think about the difference between authority and leadership.

By involving the audience every step of the way and using moments of awkward silence, Ejaj Ahmad astutely revealed the innate human tendency to look for authority figure to give direction instead of exercising leadership through one's own initiative. Instead of creating avenues for themselves, people turn to authority figures for providing them with the means by which their expectations can be met. Through creative exercises, the lecture also demonstrated how people's worldview and observations are influenced by their values, beliefs and assumptions.

The very nature of this highly interactive and innovative session reflected an important dimension of leadership: having the courage to take risks and disappoint others. Leadership is required to improve the human condition and thus, by definition, cannot stick to the status quo. Leadership is meant to mobilize people, find partners and allies, engage them in doing the work, and stir things up to save the society from stagnation. At the same time, Ejaj Ahmad freely admitted the limitations of such a lecture in creating leaders. True leadership is the result of a compelling vision, character, and courage. And vision and character are hard to teach; these qualities must come from within and to this end he urged the students to think deeply about their values, their own life stories, and their own purpose in life. These reflections and self examination are critical to providing the courage and inspiration to exercise leadership on behalf of what one feels about strongly.

The floor was then handed over to Ifty Islam for concluding remarks. He pointed out that advancing in the corporate world and pursuing one's own dreams may not be synonymous. By mentioning the huge discrepancies in the lifestyles of the rich and the poor in Bangladesh, he urged the students to be constantly aware of their position in the society and its entailing responsibilities. On this poignant note, the session was brought to an end.