"The Threaded Resort"

ULAB-Spanish Embassy joins hand for a creative work

Mushfiq Fahad Ameen
Photos: Sowrav Das

ON the last week of Februray, 14 spirited students from the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) wrote their success story through a memorable event that they organized at the Radius Centre and subsequently at their very own ULAB campus. It was titled "The Threaded Resort". The Event was supported by the embassy of Spain and inaugurated by the State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury and the Ambassdor of Spain H.E. Arturo Perez Martinez.

It was an exhibition of photographs coupled with a documentary film screening and a case study display on the lives of the vibrant yet ironclad fate. Many of them fled their old rural homes in search of a more secure future, or simply fled the social cornering still rampant in rural Bangladesh like dowry, sexual harassment and loss of property by force. All of them had unique stories to tell, yet they were bound by the same string of poverty; difficult perhaps to witness for our privileged eyes.

With the support of the Embassy of Spain, ULAB and the equally spirited course coordinator Dr. Rathana Peou van den Heuvel, it was the first time ever in Bangladesh that undergraduate students have been allowed entry into garments factories to conduct full-fledged research and that too with





Bangladeshi female garment workers. The machines they operate, the streets they walk, the tales they tell, the business they plan for the future, their love for their future generations and an indomitable struggle to protect them all became the stages in this multimedia story.

The students, from the course "Introduction to Political Thought", conducted active research into the lives and works of female garment workers as a part of their course and turned their research result into this comprehensive event. Although not at all alien to the reality of these workers, every new story was a new revelation to them as they report.

They gathered the stories of Momtaz, Maleka, Rahima and others who found their life partners in their workplaces. Hena, Nasrin and hundreds of others who had to quit their studies, stricken by utter poverty, family crises or devastating twists of photographs. One the students, stayed with a group of them over a 24-hour period, gathering domestic photos and stories despite all the risks involved. Now, the students plan to take some of the pictures to the subjects themselves at their various garment factories.

The fact, apart from the common perception, that their lives are not just about labor, struggle and exploitation, was the focus of this endeavour. Students found them laughing for minutes out of trivial gossip, caught them spending precious time with their children, saw them putting make-up on each other and their faces going red just because a camera snapped them. Many of them still continue to study, and most of them support their families in the villages.

A resourceful complement for the event, the brochure-postcard was designed by the group.