

Creating Leaders

NAZIBA BASHER

Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center (BYLC), the international award-winning leadership institute in our country, has been working for the past five years to bridge gaps in society by uniting youth from diverse backgrounds, training them on leadership, problem solving, communication and teamwork skills, and then engaging them in action projects in the community to make a contribution to Bangladesh's development. BYLC's main vision is to eradicate poverty and make a change in the country by educating the next generation of home-grown leaders.

Building Bridges through Leadership Training (BBLT), the signature programme of BYLC, is a two and a half month long leadership course. It is an after-school programme designed for college and university students. The uniqueness of the BBLT programme is in its ability to bring together young from the three different educational systems, namely English, Bangla and Madrassa. 42 students are competitively selected for the programme in equal numbers from each system. "The BBLT course will take one on a journey of self discovery, inspiration and action," says Ejaj Ahmad, Founder and President of Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center. "By the end of the course, one will emerge as a transformed person with stronger leadership,

communication and organising skills, and with a deeper sense of purpose in life."

The leadership curriculum of this course was originally developed at Harvard University in 2008 and has been revised and adapted over the years to meet the learning needs of the Bangladeshi youth. The intensity of the programme and the pragmatic learning model makes it all the more exciting and engaging for the participants. The students are encouraged to run experiments, take risks and question their own assumptions about leadership, power, influence and authority. Through reflective exercises, group activities and peer consultations, students develop their ability to inspire trust in others and mobilize people for collective action. After six weeks of in-class training, the students get an opportunity to translate their learning into action by designing and implementing small service projects in the community. To date, 373 graduates from 10 BBLT programmes have contributed to more than 20,000 hours of service in the community, and many graduates are now in leadership positions in different youth-led organisations in Bangladesh.

Admission is now open for BYLC's upcoming BBLT 11 programme in Dhaka. To learn more about the learning outcomes of BBLT and to apply online, visit www.byclc.org. The application deadline is February 22, 2014.



PHOTO: COURTESY



A Story of Success

NAZIBA BASHER

As an A level student in 2008, Mushfiq Rahman, was selected as one of the first core members of 1 Degree Initiative (1di), a registered non-profit youth organisation based in Bangladesh with branches in Canada, USA, Australia, Iraq and Nepal. His extensive effort at One Degree Initiative earned him the position of Director, Active Citizenship.

Mushfiq, majoring in Management and Finance at the American International University, Bangladesh (AIUB), talks about the year 2010 when his work was first featured in a magazine run by Saudi ARAMCO, an organisation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. "We were working with a thousand people for a medical camp and I was the project manager," he says. "Afzalunnissa Foundation, a medical institute, provided us with all the volunteers, while we provided training, skills and plenty of time." Because of his success with the project, he was asked to give a speech at TEDx Ghawar, India, where he got the opportunity to share stories of his inspirational work.

Mushfiq was then made HR In-Charge for a project with Khan Academy, an online school founded by Salman Khan. "Khan Academy initially approached AGAMI, an NGO established in USA, to translate their work in Bangla. AGAMI, then, referred 1di as a local organisation. Eventually, AGAMI became the middle man between 1di and Khan Academy."

In 2012, The British Council organised the annual Global Youth Summit, a two week-long conference held in the UK, gathering 60 young leaders from all over the world. Mushfiq, the youth leader, represented Bangladesh. "The summit mainly worked on brainstorming for a plan on collaborating projects and working together from all across the world," he says. "We focused on globalisation and connection." A story on the summit and the 60 young leaders was published in a supplement by The British Council in both the UK and Bangladesh in December 2012.



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Mushfiq is also a core team member and Production Coordinator of Finding Bangladesh- a group creating a documentary series to spread awareness regarding Bangladesh's rich heritage, mesmerising histories and perplexing mythologies. "My work is mainly research based. I not only work on finding out about history that we are not yet aware of, but also going to the specific destinations and helping out the photographers and documenters."



PHOTO:
MD ATA ISLAM KHAN MOJLISH

900 km in 3 days

petition promos on television which inspired me to go for it," he explains. In this competition Partho will have to cycle, run and swim for 900 km each. "To date, none from Bangladesh have participated in the Iron Man competition. It would be a great achievement if I could win it!" says Partho Rahman.

A student of Media and Communications at the Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), Partho is eager to work in the field of visuals. Commuting from Shyamoli to Bashundhara to attend classes, every day on his bicycle, Partho stresses on taking precautions and safety measures while cycling on the road. "The number of cyclists is increasing every day," says Partho. "It's high time that the authorities provide commuters with a cycle lane. This would help curb road accidents as well."

APURBA JAHANGIR

Partho Khan is an active member of The BD Cyclists, an organisation that promotes cycling in traffic filled cities. He recently won the "Win a Veloce" competition arranged by Cycle life and BD Cyclists, by riding an impressive 900 km in three days and two hours.

A fitness fanatic, Partho does everything from cycling to running. "Cycling would probably the best way to stay fit," says Partho. "If one can regularly ride a bicycle for 6 months, he or she would stay the healthiest of all!"

Partho has won many competitions throughout his cycling days, including the Ifad Ride for the Environment and the Big Bangla Run among others. Currently, he is focused on winning the Iron Man competition to be held in Putrajaya, Malaysia. "I saw the com-