



BREAKTHROUGH ON A GLOBAL STAGE

Team Bangladesh at Unilever Future Leaders' League 2015

KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

On March 19, 2015, Team Bangladesh, representing Unilever Bangladesh Limited, lifted the 1st runners-up crest at the Unilever Future Leaders' League 2015 held in London. They beat more than 300,000 students and teams from Canada, Sri Lanka, Germany, Russia, Philippines, Singapore and 23 other countries on their way to the final – impressing the judges and announcing their arrival on the global stage as future business leaders.

The journey was not an easy one. The Bangladesh team consisted of Nusrat Khondaker, Akib Mashrur and Aftarul Islam, students of Batch 20, Institute of Business Administration, Jahangirnagar University (IBA-JU), who qualified to participate as winners of Unilever Bizmaestros back in September 2014 as “Heisenbergs.” Since then, they have been mentored and groomed by Unilever Bangladesh's top officials for the global competition.

The event Bizmaestros provides final year university students in Bangladesh to experience the thrill of real business through competitive activities. Students were required to conduct research to accumulate consumer insight on a real brand of Unilever and then formulate a business plan for the brand. They were also asked to design their own communication material, suggest their own sustainability idea for the brand, and build a “360 degree” plan to build the brand. Throughout this process, the participants also obtained the unique opportunity to be coached and guided by the brand managers of Unilever Bangladesh.

The team from IBA-JU beat 10 teams in Bizmaestros 2014 to win the opportunity to represent Unilever Bangladesh at Unilever Future Leaders' League 2015. The Unilever Future Leaders' League (FLL) is a unique global business case

competition where selected winners from each country participate and compete to win the title. Not only do they compete but also receive the opportunity to experience leadership moments and exchange thoughts with global leaders.

In preparation for the competition, the Bangladesh team spent more than a month with Unilever Bangladesh managers, particularly Numair Chowdhuri, Senior Brand Manager, Oral Care, who acted as their mentor and Ipshita Fahmin, Leadership Development Manager as coach and country contact.



IPSHITA FAHMIN

“The challenge for the FLL team this year was twofold: first they had to work with a brand that has no existence in this country and they had very little knowledge of, and second, they had to develop a campaign for one of the most complex target groups – teenagers, and that too on a global scale. In a very short period of time, the team has worked relentlessly to overcome both these barriers and have successfully developed a world class campaign,” he said.

The team of three also underwent special sessions taken by Unilever managers to improve their personal skills for the international platform.

“We have been interacting with this team since Bizmaestros 2014,” said

Taslina Jaigirder, HR Business Partner for Marketing Function, “We observed their strengths and weaknesses and helped them identify those, as they prepared. We believe in developing our local talent up to a global level.

BizMaestros is the beginning of grooming the local talent while Future Leader's League allows us to test them against a global standard.”

During the competition, Nusrat provided a live commentary of their progress from round one to the semis and then to the finals on her Facebook pro-



NUMAIR CHOWDHURI

file. One such status read, “We are currently preparing for the final round. Our preparation so far has been great. BizMaestros gave us the opportunity to prove we are the best in the country and now it's time to take that success to a global level.”

The competition was based on a real-life business scenario concerning Cornetto, the Unilever ice cream brand, and required fresh ideas from the young participants. Ideas that were generated would go on to impress the Directors, Vice Presidents and Senior Vice Presidents of the company, who sat as the judges. Bangladesh winning this accolade places the talent of our country in high regards among some of the most

experienced business managers in the world.

“We do believe that Bangladeshi talent has the potential to reach and beat global standards,” said Mononita Syed Haq, HR Director, Unilever Bangladesh, “Most of the times all we lack is the right grooming. So at Unilever Bangladesh we have taken it up as a mission to groom the talent of this country. It is our responsibility since we are one of the biggest MNCs in the country and an age old powerhouse of business leaders.”

This year the competition was held at



TASLIMA JAIGIRDER

one of the most unique and prestigious locations of the Unilever World, known as “Four Acres”. Four Acres is a state-of-the-art learning centre where only the chosen leaders from around the world receive training. The participants of Future Leaders' League received the opportunity to meet the Global CEO and Leadership team at Four Acres.

Team Bangladesh's win in Unilever Future Leader's League 2015 is a milestone for the country. It showcases the enormous potential the talent of this country holds, as these three students from IBA-JU beat thousands of their peers from across the globe to claim one of the top titles at a major international competition.