

EXPERIENCE |

Imagine a platform where young artists, scientists, social media specialists and thinkers get together to unleash the potentials of South Asia – surely this is bound to create something dazzling! On October 2-3, 2015, individuals from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka got together in Hyderabad to speak at the TEDxSecunderabad. Brilliantly organised by the US Consulate of Hyderabad and run smoothly by Nabeel K Adeni, the event was attended by 100 professionals and students, who were invited a week before the TEDx talks took place.

Starting off with Sajid Iqbal from Bangladesh, he showcased the marvelous job his organisation Change has been doing for the past few years in Dhaka. Not only did he create an impact in society with his bottle-baati idea, he is currently building and distributing lanterns which run on solar power. "We are building low-cost lanterns which run on solar power, but are equivalent to a 10 watt bulb," he said to the audience. "The best part is that everything is made from recycled materials, which is why the lanterns are cost effective."

The talks consisted of speakers talking about building more online schools, wars going on in states for decades, politics, lifestyle, and also art and poetry.

A talk that marked the end of all talks, which also mesmerised speakers, was the one by Sunesh Rodrigo from Sri Lanka. I

am addicted – to porn – food porn, said Sunesh Rodrigo. Clearly, that was enough to cause murmurs in the crowd added with occasional smirks and gasps. A young farmer all the way from Sri Lanka spoke about growing your own food, respecting nature and what he actually learnt from playing Farmville, an online game on Facebook. "Everybody likes to take pictures of their food nowadays, but

would they like to grow it?" he asked the audience. Sunesh's witty yet practical reasoning behind growing one's own food was the last talk of the day, successfully mesmerising the crowd and also convincing them of following Sunesh's food growing project online, using the hashtag #foodlgrowSA – a move to inspire people from all over South Asia to grow their own food.

Sidra Sayeed, a young member of the Progressive Youth Forum, National Party in Pakistan, is a socio-political activist and believes that politics can make lives better, contrary to the infamous belief in South Asia. While speaking to the audience, she stressed on how not only women should come out of their homes and vote, a right that thankfully is being practiced in South Asia, they should also join political parties. "In fact everybody should join a political party and do what they can in their own ways," said Saeed. "This is a fantastic way to uplift your life."

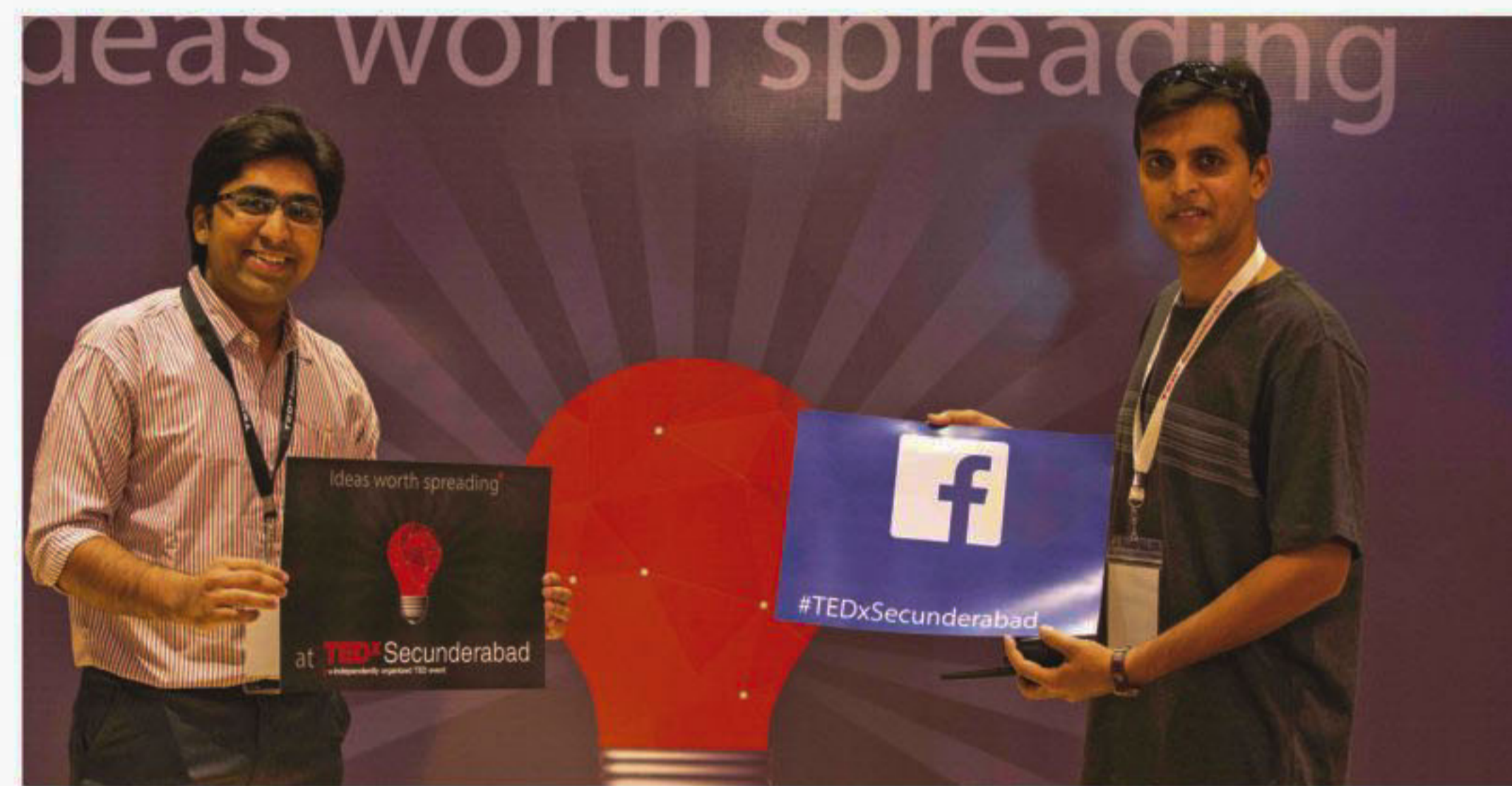
Sijo Kuruvilla George, a tech incubator in India, stressed on the 4-days a week work plan instead of the traditional 5-days a week. He also claimed that a 32-hour work week has proved to be way more productive than the 40-hour work week. "This way, you get an extra 20 percent time for yourself in a week," he said. "I am spending the 20 percent of the time playing board games. What would you like to do with your 20 percent?"

Asif Sinan ended the day with some Urdu blues. Collaborating with local artists from Hyderabad, Sinan played Jazzical – a blend of Jazz music and Hindustani classical music.

In a nutshell, the speakers and performers from all over South Asia had a story to tell – of achievements, happiness, plans, hashtag projects, human rights, history and about awareness. ■

A SOUTH ASIAN MEET

ELITA KARIM
PHOTOS: COURTESY



MEETING THE MARTIAN

OSAMA RAHMAN

Having found water on Mars, that too which is flowing, it was only a matter of time before signs of life would be found. With the sections of the populace clamouring for a cut in NASA's annual budget and the upcoming movie, The Martian, this was coincidentally the best time as any to find water on Mars. Announcing it on the heels of China's decision to forgive debts of least developing countries and Vladimir Putin's scathing attack on US foreign policies at the UN, also helped draw the attention away from US' failings to their so-called successes. Point being, where NASA has found water on Mars (undrinkable, by the way) we too have found an actual Martian. The Martian though, had a lot to say, and had more questions for us, then we for it (him? Her? What's the politically correct term here?)

Reporter: We are fascinated and wish to learn more about your culture. How have you existed for so long under such drastic conditions?

Martian: Firstly, I don't even know how we are speaking the same language. But I'll go along for plot's sakes. We have existed for so long by the virtue of the fact that humans have not found us. Now though, I am not too sure what the future holds.

Reporter: Haha! Even though it is we who fear being conquered by you, trust us when we say we come in peace.

Martian: When have human beings gone anywhere in peace anyway? Let me tell you that the water on Mars is not drinkable. Don't come here and take our water. We also don't have any oil, natural gas or minerals. Please stop exploring our planet.

Reporter: You have less faith in us than originally thought. You have now officially been with us for over a day and your views must have changed in that time.

Martian: Not in the least. If anything, it has grown even bitter. We have been watching you and teaching you for years. But it seems logic is difficult to grasp for a large lot of you. While the masses may be intelligent, intellect doesn't seem to rule in your lands.

Reporter: Wait a minute, wait a minute. Are you saying all humans are stupid? Humans are not stupid!

Martian: I did not say as such. I said a concept like 'might is right' or 'survival of the fittest' seems to apply more towards the human race than any other race. Humans are the only animals capable of behaving like 'an animal'.

Reporter: So not only are you saying we are stupid but you are also calling us animals. So basically, as a racist, judgmental individual from a planet filled with such individuals we are sure, how would you say we should live?

Martian: I am not trying to tell you how to live. All I am saying is that we don't want to have you find us or come visit us. We

like to offer you nothing and we expect nothing in return. We just want to be left alone.

Reporter: Sir. Sir. Sir, let me interrupt you there for a second.

Martian: I was quiet.

Reporter: Sir, please, you had your turn. Martian sir, are you saying, and I am at a shock for words really, are you saying that you don't want us? Are you saying you support a universal form of segregation?

Martian: Get off your moral high ground because so do you. Segregation is inbred in your systems. You do it at every opportunity, at ever discreet ways. Look into any neighbourhood anywhere and you'll see how you flock towards each

your leaders?

Martian: We don't have leaders. We don't have followers. You cannot see us because we are not caged by artificial borders, trapped inside brick or mud made homes. We are born free and we roam free. We get together when we want to and we work together when we want to.

Reporter: You have all heard for yourselves the words from the leader of the Martian world.

Martian: I am not...

Reporter: The Martian world, a rogue state with no electorally approved leader, has just sent us its message. They don't want anything to do with us. In fact, they think the universe is better off without us.



other based on your very own sense of moralities. We don't want your kind and I am sorry to say it.

Reporter: Ladies and gentleman, you have heard this live all by yourselves. I really have nothing to say anymore. I cannot believe what I am hearing. But neither must you. Yet we still have time, so I'll ask you just one question. How do you elect

You have heard about them working together on secret plans to annihilate humanity and their communist, racist leader is now being put behind bars as we speak. And this just in, something terrible has happened somewhere obscure and though we can't confirm the nationality of the individual, he seems to be bizarre looking and has a very Martian name. We will keep you posted. ■