

DUNMUN 2015: The UN's Youth Model

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Seventeen goals and one destination - a key to a poverty-free world by 2030 - this is how the newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals of United Nations can be explained. And this year, within three months of the adoption of the goals, the Dhaka University Model United Nations Association (DUMUNA) came up with their effort to make the youth leaders aware, launching the fourth session of Dhaka University National Model UN.

The effort seems to have turned into a grand success as hundreds of students from USA, UK, South Korea, India, Nepal, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and some other countries came to join the conference as executive board members and delegates and ended up passing nine resolution papers in the Model UN conference that is considered as the most prestigious one of the country.

The conference was inaugurated by the Vice Chancellor of the university, Professor AAMS Arefin Siddique in the Nabab Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban on December 21. The inauguration was followed by a plenary



session with Wahiduzzaman Siddique as the Secretary General.

The delegates got an opportunity to interact with renowned diplomat M Humayun Kabir, Director of Economic Affairs in Bangladesh Foreign Ministry Shanchita Haque and Director (UN wing) of the same ministry Mosammat Shahanara Monica in the three "meet the dignitaries" sessions.

Fatima Muradi, an Afghan student who

attended last year as a delegate, was seen serving as the Director of UNDP this year where she was conducting a discussion on sustainable industrialisation. She opined, "DUNMUN is a platform where ambitious, talented young leaders come together to practice negotiations, diplomacy, and politics."

In another committee where Julie Farzana from USA was chairing the US Senate, racial prejudice in United States

was being discussed. She said, "DUNMUN is the first ever MUN to stimulate US Senate. I am looking forward to the experience."

The most powerful UN Security Council worked on the on-going crisis in the Middle East where the delegate of Iraq Sushma Giri, a law student from Nepal was emphasising on the end of war in the region as she believed war and sustainable development cannot go hand-in-hand.

After four days of discussions in the committee sessions and crisis sessions, the committees passed out twenty draft resolutions. This year, nine of them were passed in the plenary session on the last day of the conference.

DUNMUN was also a platform of cultural exchange. In two back to back socials, the secretariat made arrangements of cultural activities by both organisers and the delegates. Bands Shironamhin and Oblique performed on the stage as well.

The conference ended with a closing ceremony which was followed by a gala dinner on December 24, gifting the delegates and organisers with some unforgettable memories.

Breaking the Unfair Barriers of Exclusion

InclusionX Volunteer Orientation Programme

SALMA MOHAMMAD ALI

InclusionX arranged its first Volunteer Orientation Programme on December 21, 2015 at EMK Center in Dhaka. The event began in the morning with an introductory speech by Labib Tazwar Rahman, a 17 year old disability rights activist and founder of InclusionX.

When asked what motivated him to start this organisation, Labib said, "A question I was asked very frequently as a child is: 'Your brother... is he mad?' I never got used to this question. It hurt the same way it did the previous time. I hated the people who were afraid of my brother. But after all these years, as I look back, I really don't feel any hatred towards kids running away from my brother, who has cerebral palsy (a movement disability). It's not their fault that they weren't brought up in an inclusive society where playing with children with special needs is deemed normal. Since childhood, exposure to people with special needs is crucial and somebody needed to start it. We launched InclusionX to integrate people with special needs into society."

The objective of this programme was to help the volunteers recognise their crucial role in facilitating the much-needed progress towards a barrier-free, inclusive society and learn about the tasks they will perform in the two upcoming months.

Accompanying Labib's speech was a slideshow presentation highlighting InclusionX's recent endeavours. It showed moments from the art exhibition arranged (in partnership with Blissful Spirits) for children with special needs, and the Viqarunnisa Noon School's Triune Festival.

Next, the guest of honour A.H.M. Noman Khan, Executive Director, Centre for Disability in Development, and winner of the Ramon Magsaysay Award 2010, went up to the podium. He stressed on the importance of breaking the barriers of exclusion



that exist for differently-abled individuals.

"It is organisations like this that change the world. Given the time and support from everyone, most differently-abled people can do everything," he said.

Students from SWID (Society for the Welfare of the Intellectually Disabled), a school and rehabilitation centre, performed on stage, astonishing everyone with their dancing and singing talents.

A video to encourage InclusionX volunteers made by youths from 7 different countries across 4 continents was shown next, after which Labib attempted to clear out some prevalent misconceptions about people with disabilities. "Once we give them a chance we'll see they're not very different from us," he explained.

This preceded an interactive session conducted by Noshin Saiyara, where volunteers divided into groups were provided with some real life situations and were asked to find creative solutions to the problems. The

programme concluded around 1:30 pm, after Ali Mashraf gave guidelines to the volunteers regarding the upcoming visits to special schools and the computer training workshops, which will be held at EMK MakerLab, for the special children.

"Children with special needs are discriminated against. One person alone can't make much difference. So, when InclusionX is willing to provide opportunities to directly help these people, I feel that I should participate," explained Shaheer Ahnaf, a 15-year-old volunteer.

If you wish to volunteer, visit <https://www.facebook.com/inclusionx/?fref=ts>

Salma Mohammad Ali fears she is becoming a crazy cat lady and uses writing as a means to grasp on to sanity. Send her your views/hate/love at <https://www.facebook.com/salma.ali209>