DILIGENT DELEGATES AT BANMUN 2016

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Had anyone tried to sneak in the Adamjee Cantonment College, Dhaka on July 14, he would have seen Wasiuzzaman, a fifth grader from Juvenile English Medium School of the capital, discussing on Malaysia's policy regarding the climate change in the UNEP committee of this year's Bangladesh Model UN conference. From the very first day, the determined child carried the position paper of his country where his research on the agenda was documented and built arguments to protect his nation from climate change.

Wasi was one of the many young minds to attend the conference; there were 619 students of different age groups up to 18, from different schools and colleges of the country who attended the largest ever Model UN conference of the country, BANMUN 2016.

This year, BANMUN unearthed its eighth session under the theme "Climate Change and Sustainable Development Goals" and like every year United Nations Youth and Students Association of Bangladesh (UNYSAB) organised it with the support of United Nations Information Centre, Dhaka.

The conference kicked off on July 13 at the Adamjee Cantonment College with an inauguration ceremony which was marked by a tribute to Gulshan Attack victims. The ceremony was attended by Advocate Sanjida Khanam MP as the chief guest with M. Moniruzzaman as the special guest and in presence of the Secretary General of the conference, Mohammad Mamun Mia.

The delegates were divided into ten groups for ten assigned committees, UN Security Council, UN Development Programme, UN Environment Programme, UN Human Rights Council, Economic and Financial Committee, International Monetary Fund, Social Cultural and Humanitarian Committee, World Health Organisation, World Trade Organisation, and Nobel Laureates respectively.

UNYSAB invited Syed Muntasir Mamun, currently serving as the Director of East Asia and Pacific Wing at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the "Meet the Dignitary" session on the third day of the conference through which the delegates enjoyed the opportunity to interact with a career diplomat who gave them the insights of international relations, diplomacy and the art of negotiation.

BANMUN 2016 was not all about negotiation, debates and diplomacy. The cultural night, called "BANMUN Socials" facilitated the delegates and organisers to have some moments to get entertained after the hours of arguments. Both delegates and organisers performed on the night and amused the viewers.

The conference ended on July 17 with a closing plenary, where the resolutions were presented and followed by a closing ceremony which was attended by the Chairman of University Grants Commission, Professor Abdul Mannan as the chief guest. Nahim Razzaq MP, Chairman of Dhaka University's Women and Gender Studies Department Dr. Sayed Saikh Imtiaz and the Principal of the college Brigadier General Tameem Ahmed Chowdhury, ndc, psc were among the special guests.

The guests imparted speeches on the importance of diplomacy and the current scenario of the country. The awardees of the conference, the Best Delegate, Outstanding Delegate, Special Mention and the Best Position Paper for each committee, received their awards from the chief guest in the ceremony and the curtain of the largest MUN conference of the country fell subsequently with the call for peace and justice all over the world.

KOLPOKOUSHOL: An Antidisciplinary Experimental Lab

MASHIAT LAMISA

Kolpokoushol is an open platform for talented individuals of Bangladesh to work together, and develop new ideas, despite the differences in their fields of education. With the unique idea of an antidisciplinary environment inspired by the MIT Media Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Kolpokoushol intends to encourage its participants to solve local and community specific problems.

From July 21 to July 24, Kolpokoushol held a workshop for students who value creativity and have an interest in engineering or mathematics in the undergraduate level. Other than students with such backgrounds, they also accepted students from journalism, law, business, fine arts and even schools and colleges. The selection process is highly competitive as the students have to excel in an application specially designed by the mentors of this year.

This year, the workshop included Syed Ishtiaque Ahmed (PhD candidate, Cornell University), Deeni Fatiha (MIT '13, Harvard '18), Syed Arefinul Haque (PhD student, Northeastern University), Arpeeta Shams Mizan (LLM, Harvard Law School '15), Devabrata Chakraborty (Director, Governance Innovation Unit, Prime Minister's Office) and the founder of Kolpokoushol, Nazmus Saquib (PhD student, MIT Media Lab) who carried out several interactive sessions focused on innovating the use of data analytics in the fields of journalism and law in Bangladesh. Sessions and projects were offered in more topics like mixed reality, big data visualisation and wearable electronics.

Throughout the whole programme, the participants got to brainstorm about a

variety of innovative topics such as design thinking, data science, law adoption and rapid hardware prototyping. At the end of the four day-long programme, highly original prototypes were the final output of the participants, who worked together in groups regardless of their major and age. On July 24, the projects were open for public display.

Nazmus Saquib, founder and director of Kolpokoushol says, "Our goal at Kolpokoushol is much more than holding workshops. It is an experimental lab and an idea generation ground for students where we aim to merge ideas with a bigger vision to make changes in the community. Kolpokoushol's idea is to grow and promote an antidisciplinary culture, and work with students in the process."

One of the participants, Labib, 17, says, "This programme allowed me to work with a project on mixed reality to educate children with special needs – something I am deeply passionate about but couldn't have done anywhere else."

The mentors of the workshop plan on providing further technical and logistical help to the participants' projects throughout the year. The most promising projects from the workshop will soon be deployed in the official website www.kolpokoushol.org.

Kolpokoushol promises the beginning of an initiative that can go a long way in making students approach a wider path in working with different professionals and growing to become a creative individual. It is suitable for enthusiastic young minds who are interested to understand the idea of an antidisciplinary environment and to get a hands-on research experience in a field of their choice. This year, they are looking forward to building an open hardware lab in Bangladesh. Kolpokoushol is also working on making data accessible to the public by the end of the year. To understand law and news data and get access to them is the people's rights and along with the student collaborators, Kolpokoushol is working on making data access easier for all citizens. The team plans on continuing such unique workshop in the coming years and hopes to find more exciting young people from Bangladesh.