



# CONNECTING, COLLABORATING AND CO-CREATING

## *Youth Leadership Summit by BYLC*

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As the countdown begun on the enormous screen, the massive crowd joined in, echoing across the hall, the descending of the numbers. The concluding footage showed the alliance of hundreds of delegates, boasted of 30 renowned speakers, of zero selfie count and Facebook scrolling; at the end of it everyone broke into applause.

This was how the Youth Leadership Summit conducted by Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center (BYLC) finally finished its three-day programme on August 21. The summit was held at the International Convention City, Bashundhara in Dhaka, bringing together around 400 national and international delegates after a rigorous selection procedure. It consisted of leadership sessions, plenaries and keynote speeches from notable visionaries.

The inauguration was led by eminent national personalities including Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Speaker of the National Parliament; Gowher Rizvi, International Affairs Adviser to the PM; Biren Sikder, State Minister for Youth and Sports, among others.

Expressing her enthusiasm, Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury said, "I was surprised and honoured to have received the invitation to chair a youth summit despite being on the verge of turning 50." Three days of constant exploration, deep reflection and delving into the core values of leadership left an electrifying impact across the delegates.

Ejaz Ahmad, the founder of BYLC, along with Hugh O'Doherty, faculty member of Harvard University, carried out the leadership sessions by emphasising on the distinction of leadership and authority. The stimulating environment became more apparent as the speakers came down from the podiums and engaged with the participants individually through question and answer rounds. The delegates learned about the importance of stakeholders in a system and the tasks of today's leaders – of dealing with adaptive challenges rather than technical. O'Doherty addressed the crowd, talking about the immunity and resistance we face before a change whereas

Ahmad shed light on the process of proper observation, interpretation and effective intervention.

The summit also convened a good number of plenary sessions chaired by the Mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation, Annisul Huq; Md. Shahidul Haque, secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other dignitaries over the span of three days. These assembled panellists are pioneers in their respecting fields who focused heavily on themes related to leadership in an interconnected world, the changing faces of tertiary education, entrepreneurship and investment. The discussants talked about their stories of breaking norms and chasing dreams whilst inspiring young minds.



Marcia Bernicat, the US Ambassador to Bangladesh, and Pauline Tamesis, UNDP Country Director, shared their experiences of breakthroughs and their associations with the country. Addressing global challenges, Kazi Anis Ahmed, Director of Gemcon Group, insisted on the importance of being open minded – to remain responsive to data and not just panache or glamour – and also talked about the battle of "passion vs. parents".

Other keynote speakers such as Maimuna Ahmad, founder and CEO of Teach for Bangladesh, and Pradeep Singh, Deputy Dean and CEO, Mohali Campus of the Indian School of Business (ISB), talked about going back to the basics of education and shed light on technology as

an equaliser. Korvi Rakhshand, founder of JAAGO Foundation; along with Kamran Bakr, Chairman, Unilever; Ivy Huq Russell, CEO of Maya, were also among the change-makers summoned to spread motivation through their accounts of leadership. The messages conveyed were staying humble in spite of power, the importance of breaking rules sometimes, and also the need to be responsible and on the lookout for one another.

The delegates were engaged in activities of penning down their personal action plans and participated in reflecting exercises guided by Khaled Saifullah, Oxford graduate and one of the lead instructors of BYLC. They further went through grooming sessions conducted by Sir Christopher Ball, former Warden of Keble College, University of Oxford and Dean Williams, Harvard faculty member, who talked about leadership for a fractured world and received a standing ovation. Talking about Dean Williams, one of the delegates expressed exhilaration of having been instructed by the writer himself of the book that was distributed among them. The participants further benefited from a globally enriched network of driven minds and partook in a cultural programme which included performances by Shadhona, and national and international delegates.

After three days of sharing values, the summit ended on a high note with a poetry penned by Sir Christopher Ball, reflecting the theme of this year's summit: "Connect. Collaborate. Co-create." The summit delegates will also get the chance to participate in a competition involving the strategising of a developing plan; 10 winning proposals will avail the winning prize of USD 10,000. The fourth summit of BYLC was carried out efficiently and gloriously despite certain limitations for which the BYLC network garnered praises and accolades.

*Iqra suffers from wanderlust and zones out most of the time. She hopes to see the Loch Ness monster someday and in the mean time complains about Economics. Reach out to her at iqralaqa@gmail.com or www.facebook.com/iqra.l.qamari*