

THE QUEEN'S YOUNG LEADERS 2017

"Change is a youth-led development agency working in the field of green innovations, alternative & renewable energy research, water security and social business development. We involve youths directly with our projects and activities which help them to develop confidence, improve project management capacity and nurture creativity. Since September, 2012 Change has been working with various national and international development cooperation and acquired goodwill by implementing project successfully. Change is also the global partner of Liter of Light which is working in more than 37 countries promoting low cost affordable lighting solutions. We developed efficiency improvement ideas for urban slums and industries known as Solar Bottle Light and Solar Pipe Light, affordable local solar lanterns, UV solar water purifiers, local solar irrigation pumps and solar street lights. Our main mission is to address social and environmental crisis with locally adaptable and affordable ideas. Our vision is to strengthen local capacity and innovations to address challenges in a sustainable manner. We strongly believe simplicity could be the best solution to meet any mega crisis." – SAJID IQBAL.

Changemakers on the go!

ELITA KARIM

PHOTOS: ORCHID CHAKMA

As the year comes to an end, many look back at 2016 and wonder if things can be better in the coming year. Well, for Sajid Iqbal and Rahat Hossain, 2017 looks a lot better already! These two young Bangladeshi

entrepreneurs and change-makers have recently won the Queen's Young Leaders Programme for 2017.

A programme that discovers, celebrates and supports talented young people across the commonwealth, according to queensyoungleaders.com, for both Sajid founder of Change and Rahat co-founder of CriticalLink, the award means so much more than just flying all the way to London to meet the quest! The award is an opportunity for them to do more for the country and to do better.

"I applied for the award six months ago," says Sajid. "After going through several stages and interviews, their final announcement was made a couple of weeks ago. I was ecstatic!"

The Queen's Young Leader Award recognises people aged between 18-29 from across the Commonwealth, who are taking the lead in their communities and using their skills to transform lives. "I got to know about this award from previous winners and also from the website," says Rahat. "The Young Leaders Award opens application every year around July. There is an online application that consists of different types of questions regarding your work and the social impact you make."

Both Sajid and Rahat have been encouraging the youth in Dhaka and elsewhere to come forward and work for their respective communities. Winning the Queen's Leadership Award is simply a step forward and also an extra cheer for the same young changemakers and entrepreneurs to build confidence, accept challenges and implement ideas to better society.

| ACHIEVEMENT |

| EXPERIENCE |

My roommate, Sarzina, Radio Jockey, Radio Foorti, and I woke up in the early hours, still in a daze. Breakfast was always served by 7 AM, with only half an hour in hand before the bus would be ready to leave. Sarzina and I were always fashionably late (no more than 15 minutes, I swear). Even so, we were always ready with high spirits for the new adventures of the day.

This day, we knew, would be different than all other days of the trip, even before they even came. This was the day that would actually be marked in history, the day the Youth Delegation from Bangladesh in 2016 would be given the honour to meet the President of India, Honourable Shri Pranab Mukherjee, for whom we had travelled to India. Upon his invitation and



Bangladesh 100 Member Youth Delegation 2016 in front of Rashtrapati Bhawan.

PHOTO: BYDG16

THE TRIP OF A LIFETIME: 100 MEMBER YOUTH DELEGATION (PART II)

PHOTOS AND TEXT: NAZIBA BASHER

the initiative of the Indian High Commission in Bangladesh, and 100 professionals and students, best in their fields, get this once in a lifetime opportunity. The meeting was to be held in the evening, so naturally we went into 'tourist mode' during the day.

The second day's adventures began with a trip to the Gandhi Raj Ghat, where Mahatma Gandhi's *Samadhi* (funerary monument) resides. The Raj Ghat is a plain black marble platform that marks the spot of his cremation that took place on 31 January 1948. It is left open to the sky while an eternal flame burns at one end. A stone footpath in between soothing green lawns leads to the walled space that houses the memorial. The memorial has the epitaph 'H'e Ram', (literally 'O' Ram', but also translated to 'O God'), believed to be the last words uttered by Gandhi.

After we paid our respects to the great man, we left to be bewildered by the Red Fort. To our utter dismay, as it remains closed on Mondays, we could not explore the insides. But some of us constantly spoke about Lal Bagh Kella and its sheer resemblance to the Red Fort. Sarzina and I stuck by each other almost throughout the whole trip, so this was when we also began making other friends. A friend from before, Atriq Anam Khan, theatre activist and budding filmmaker, was busy photographing the grandeur of the fort from the outside, while Sarzina and I chit-chatted with new friends Md Saad Uddin and Sadman Islam Anik, where we learned that we were actually speaking to the Midfielder of Abahani Football Club and the U-19 National Football Team, and the opening batsman of Bangladesh A team, on the verge of joining the National Test Team, respectively!

The next wonder we went to was the Delhi Jama Masjid. That is where I witnessed the true diversity of India. In the Masjid, as we were mystified by the size and grandness of the mosque itself, we saw people from all walks of life, from all



Upon arrival at the President House.

Above right Mahatma Gandhi's Memorial

Right The Delhi Jama Masjid



class, races and religion being able to admire the Holy place. With peace as the ultimate signatory, the aura of the Masjid would give a calming vibe. We strolled around the big, open space in front of the Masjid, as some people fed the pigeons, some prayed, some explored and some stood still- in awe. During the visit to the mosque, Sarzina and I, along with a student of Media Studies and Journalism, University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh, Imran Khan, took a little tea-break. The roadside ginger tea, made purely with just milk and no water had its own charm on us. Every little bit of the trip was something new, something different, something we could fall in love with.

We then hurried back to the hotel as fast as we could. With an hour in hand, we had to make sure to look our finest for the President. Adorned in a plethora of traditional sarees-- starting from Jamdani, to Nakshikantha, to Muslim-- the ladies made sure to highlight the best materials of our own land, while the men looked sharply clad in classy suits. We were then, finally, on our way to the grand residence of the President- the Rashtrapati Bhawan. The arrival itself had our hairs on our

arms standing on their ends. We were actually not just witnessing the grand residence, we were invitees. A 100 people from Bangladesh, once again, had their lives changed with an opportunity as such. How many people can boast of meeting the President of India? How many have the privilege to hear him speak to them face to face? This meeting is what the whole trip revolved around and this

very meeting is the medium of a stronger bond between our two nations- Bangladesh and India.

What happened once we entered was even more thrilling and emotional for all of us. To know about the next days of this once in a lifetime trip, keep your eyes on next week's *Star Weekend* for the third part of this series.

To be continued...



30 NUMBERS

Is the number of civilians, who were killed on Sunday after Islamic State launched an attack in the Syrian town of al-Bab to prevent people from fleeing, the Turkish military said in a statement on Monday. Syrian rebels supported by Turkish troops have laid siege to the Islamic State-held town for weeks under the "Euphrates Shield" operation launched by Turkey nearly four months ago to sweep the Sunni hardliners and Kurdish fighters from its Syrian border.

Source: Reuters