

DOERS TODAY, NATION BUILDERS TOMORROW



Dhaka Hub at Davos ...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 40

I wanted to put a human face to the climate challenge because people relate best to stories, not statistics. So I talked about the woman I met last month in Dhaka whose family lost all

with Indian state and private institutions, given that the panel was being hosted and livestreamed by NDTV. I appealed to the Indian prime minister and the Indian people to stop supporting the Rampal coal plant to help protect our shared heritage of the

panelists and the moderator. The other panelists, despite being very prominent people, were courteous, and treated me as an equal, which I appreciated. They valued having a young speaker in their midst, especially someone from a particularly climate vulner-

days largely subsided, even though I could feel the high stakes of a livestreamed discussion with top leaders.

You have campaigned on the ground against the Rampal Power Plant. One of the most powerful moments on the panel is when you shed light on the issue and it is amplified by Al Gore. Tell us about that moment. Last year at the same meeting in Davos, Al Gore was on a panel with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, and there was an exchange between them about Rampal where Al Gore criticized the project and PM Hasina defended it. So I knew that Al Gore was well aware of the project. It was really great to have him amplifying the message after I raised the issue.

I particularly wanted to highlight the Indian dimension because, as I mentioned on the panel, the Rampal plant has been driven by one Indian entity after another since the very beginning. The NTPC started with the original 50:50 partnership with BPDB; then BHEL won the engineering and procurement contract; Exim Bank of India came on to provide around 2 billion dollars of funding; and finally now Coal India is looking to supply the coal — despite it being denied for years that the coal would come from India. I wish Al Gore had built on the Indian angle further and make an appeal to Prime Minister Modi, but even though that did not happen, it was really inspiring to pick up my words and elevate the subject further. **Tell us about the Shapers community at Davos.**

Even though being on the panel was a very rare opportunity, I feel that the friendships I have built with the other shapers from across the world are far more valuable. We had youth from 40 countries, from Venezuela to Tanzania to Norway to Australia, doing everything from promoting mental health awareness, building smart cities, providing rural solar energy access, and much more.

Despite the inspiring work that everyone is doing, everyone is really humble, caring, and selfless. We supported each other throughout the

week by bringing each other food, facilitating connections, supporting one another's panels, and simply being there for one another. At the end of the week, we shared our stories and ended up crying as people opened up and shared their deep struggles and bold triumphs. We were sad to be leaving the friends we made, but we all agreed that we would maintain these bonds and continue to elevate each other to create positive change across the world.

How would you sum up your experience in Davos?

I believe the theme of this year, of Creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World, is an extremely pertinent one given the divisive narratives we are hearing now. I appreciate their efforts to amplify the voice of the youth. This year, the most shapers had speaking roles compared to any previous years. 28 shapers spoke at panels, led discussions, or moderated conversations

However, I have two reservations that I hope the Forum will take into account. First, the Forum gave Donald Trump the biggest platform at the conference, despite his unmistakable role in fracturing the world. He was not challenged about his responsibility on climate change and human rights. I believe this goes against the values of the Forum. Dialogue cannot be simply about hearing everyone's views — it has to include challenging dangerous views based in discrimination and hatred, even if it comes from the US president.

Secondly, I found the issue of extreme inequality to be largely absent from the agenda, even when talking about economic matters. For example, Trump's tax plan was praised as a huge success, whereas it will amount to an immense transfer of wealth to the very top economic class. Very few even acknowledged the responsibility to change economic paradigms to create an economic order that works for everyone. I found this disappointing.

The author is a graduate student at the Harvard Kennedy School and Stanford Graduate School of Business.

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

COMMITTED TO IMPROVING THE STATE OF THE WORLD

PHOTOS: COURTESY

crops in the rainfall last year near Sylhet, resulting in her being forced to come to the city and work in people's homes.

Finally, I wanted to draw the close connection of the Rampal coal plant

Sundarbans.

What was the actual experience of being on the panel?

It was a rather surreal experience for sure. Right before the panel, I was in a small speakers' room with all the other

able country. As the panel started, I made sure to take a deep breath and remind myself that it was not about me, but simply about carrying the voices of the vulnerable. The nervousness I had felt over the previous few



PHOTOS: COURTESY