

A chat with Saiara Musarrat Adrita

YOUTH DESK

Saiara Musarrat Adrita scored outstanding grades in both her O and A Level examinations, which she sat for in 2009 and 2011 respectively. Currently a program officer at Microsoft, she has a flourishing career. We caught up with Adrita on the eve of this year's 'The Daily Star O and A Level Awards'.

Tell us a bit about The Daily Star Awards.
The awards were definitely a motivating factor. When I was young, I was unaware of the fact that good grades actually help in getting into better universities, but I definitely knew about the popularity of The Daily Star Awards. I remember having conversations about taking enough subjects, just to win this award. In fact, I took nine subjects during my O Level examination just to ensure I was not missing out on this recognition.
How has this award helped you in your endeavors?
This award has always played a vital role in my

resume. People, both at home and abroad know how eminent this award is, as only the outstanding students receive it.
How do you associate your thoughts about Microsoft when it comes to grooming young minds for the future?
Microsoft expects young people to be updated with technical knowledge. The message that Microsoft always conveys is that one might not know it all, but one should always learn it all. Having the mindset to learn and grow, therefore, is very important. With Google and YouTube at their fingertips, I think that the young generation can use technology to its full potential.
What message would you give to the young people in Bangladesh on using technology to bring positive changes?
I already think that the younger generation has the spirit to drive towards positive changes. However, they should bring technology into effective play by making sure that they are using the internet for learning and teaching. In this competitive era, we need to think of everything from a global perspective, not just in the context of Bangladesh. We must also allocate time to use technology for self development.



Saiara Musarrat Adrita

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

IVLP 2019 A wonderful experience



PHOTO: COURTESY

MD TAJDIN HASSAN

The International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP) is an exclusive exchange programme by the Department of State, USA. It boasts worldwide recognition, as professionals from all around the globe become a part of it. Participants are nominated and selected annually by US Embassies in countries around the world.
This year, I was fortunate enough to be nominated under the category of 'Youth and Civic Engagement' for IVLP 2019. It was a landmark in my life, as it provided me with knowledge, exposed me to different views and gave me many interesting stories to remember.
The project began at Washington DC on March 9, where the participants united to explore the roles of federal government and international bodies, working with youth and civic engagement. During the city tour, the visitors gathered to share their experiences. On the premises of Graduate School USA, a number of discussion sessions took place regarding the project.
A portfolio, which focused on helping the US Government to engage the youth globally to tackle challenges of today, was discussed. Three specific areas were highlighted: engaging global youth with shared policy challenges; empowering global youth leaders through networks, exchanges, and opportunities; and elevating youth voices and causes.
With every single moment of the IVLP, I wondered how many stories I would have missed, if I were not fortunate enough to be a part of it. The innovations brought forth by the participants, in order to make the world a better place, amazed me.
On March 14, we travelled to the state capital of Utah, Salt Lake City. Our key activities included themes regarding the role

of state government in promoting youth engagement.
One of the most exciting aspects of the tour was an interactive workshop on theories of change, monitoring and evaluation. It took a practical approach by giving the visitors an opportunity to reflect on their own work, constituencies, and goals. Cicero Social Impact facilitated the workshop.
I learned about YouthWorks, a community-based programme that assists youth with job and life skills training. The programme is designed for individuals who are overcoming substance abuse, gang involvement, court recidivism, school fail



ure, or negative family and peer relations.
We were eventually split into four sub-groups, and told to visit a few cities. I was a part of the group that visited Louisville. Again, I was surprised to see how the local government supported youth communities with various programmes and partnerships. One of them is YouthBuild, an education, job training and leadership programme that works with low income adults by helping them study for high school diplomas, as well as training them to be employable.

Representatives of community organisations, including nonprofits, government, and civic groups, gathered for a roundtable discussion with us. The conversation focused on the importance of inclusion in addressing civic issues, including youth engagement.
We all reunited at Miami, where we were near the end of our trip with the sessions on leadership development, mentoring and outreach to support youth, and digital storytelling for social causes.
We went to Miami-Dade County Office of the Mayor and learned its vision, goal

visual storytelling tools for philanthropic organisations. The company believes that humanitarian efforts are more effective when equipped with digital videos to tell their story, and sell their ideas to new partners.
Emmy-Award Winning Investigative Reporter Christina Boomer Vasquez introduced 'My Miami Story programme' to us. The programme brings together community members to discuss issues they care about, including education, affordable housing, and job opportunities. In Bangladesh we may think of building a platform where citizens can talk about their community issues they care about.
The programme formally ended with a Synthesis and Planning session. The participants gathered to reflect upon their experiences during the trip, identified trends and best practices in the field, and considered new contacts or approaches that might benefit their work. The session allowed for a comparative discussion of the needs and opportunities of different community and country contexts. It used design-thinking to guide reflection and planning. The core benefits of the programme were that we could rationalise and consolidate all the learnings we had in three weeks' time. It helped me identify at least two useful practices I may implement after returning home.
I will not remember this wonderful journey as a trip or as a professional programme, but rather, as a dream. The knowledge that I have gained from IVLP 2019 along with the participants from 22 different countries, I can implement them to make my country a better one. It was a dream that made me realise that despite so many troubles in the world right now, there are still many people trying to make it a better place to live in.
The writer is the Head of Marketing at The Daily Star.



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YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES



ANU Asia Pacific Week 2019 in Australia

Australian National University's Asia Pacific Week is an interdisciplinary conference for students and young professionals across the world who are interested in Asia and the Pacific. The 2019 conference explores the theme, 'New Horizons: Identities, Challenges and Opportunities.'

DEADLINE: April 17, 2019 | Conference



Yunus Scholarship | One Young World 2019 in London, UK

Yunus Centre is currently accepting applications for candidates to participate in the One Young World 2019 Summit in London. 10 selected candidates from Bangladesh will have the opportunity to accompany Nobel Laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus, as a member of his delegation.

DEADLINE: April 19, 2019 | Conference



Arabic Summer School 2019 in Rabat, Morocco

Applications are now open for the Arabic Summer School 2019 in Rabat, Morocco. This summer programme will be held at different prestigious schools. It is crafted to develop student proficiency and communication in Arabic, and further delve into art, politics, or Islamic studies.

DEADLINE: May 31, 2019 | Summer School