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SAMPRETI-E-PROGATI

Harmony as a tool to prevent violent extremism

KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

The grand finale of the open mic speech competition “Sampreeti-E-Progati”, supported by Manusher Jonno Foundation and organised by Event Exposure, was held on July 27, 2019 at Spectra Convention Center in Gulshan, Dhaka.

This one-of-a-kind project set out to generate conversation among the youth on topics under the umbrella of “harmony” and “violent extremism”. Giving them a mic to speak their hearts out, the young members of the society—all students at different educational institutions—shared their stories, opinions and suggestions.

The roadshow segment of the project began three months ago. The organisers, Event Exposure, arranged in-house open mic speech competitions at eight private universities: Asian University of Bangladesh, City University, Eastern University, Northern University, Stamford University, Southeast University, University of Asia Pacific, and World University of Bangladesh. Added to this list was College of Home Economics, Madrasah-e-Alia Dhaka, Uttar Badda Islamia Kamil Madrasah, and Misbahul Ulum Kamil Madrasah. Two participants from each institute were selected to attend a boot camp and workshop ahead of the grand finale.

The boot camp and workshop was held at Bishwo Shahitto Kendro on July 23, 2019. The highly informative and interactive event of that day included sessions by renowned university professors and industry experts; knowledge was disseminated on topics that included international context and radicalisation in Bangladesh, cyber safety and security, possibilities of youth in social harmony, and many more. The speakers at the event mentioned that Bangladesh was going through turbulent times and how hope and harmony could work as a



preventative tool against violence and extremism.

On July 27, the 24 “Harmony Ambassadors” delivered their speeches in front of judges at the grand finale, on the topic “Role of family and religion in preventing violent extremism”. The jury panel included veteran television, film and theatre actor Khairul Alam Sabuj, popular movie star Ferdous Ahmed, and chief advisor of Event Exposure Ashoke Ranjan Dutta. The chief guest of the finale was Touhidul Islam, Associate Professor and Chairperson, Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Dhaka.

Khairul Alam Sabuj said, “Such an event is very relevant on this day and age. We, as human beings, need to find the truth for ourselves. This programme has been a great initiative to give the youth a platform to speak their mind about a key topic.”

“I have learned so much from my parents, teachers, and friends all my life. Our lives are defined by humanity, relationships, and the faith we have. I believe this event is an eye-opener. But we must not stop here, for these messages needs to be spread to the masses and

only the youth can do that to its best capacity,” said Ferdous Ahmed in his speech.

As Deputy Program Manager of SAMPRETI project, Shahjadi Begum played an integral role throughout the event. She emphasised on the role Manusher Jonno Foundation played in this project, and commented, “Organisations rarely work on agendas that bring topics like harmony and violent extremism together, to find solutions to problems we face on a daily basis. We are proud to have undertaken this project that we plan on expanding in the coming years, as we reach out to more and more youth across the country. We want the youth to take it as a responsibility and carry the message forward.”

The final contest saw participants refer to recent news, personal stories and even religious text to deliver speeches on the given topic in their unique styles. In the end, Mahmuda Sarwar Srabony of Southeast University was declared champion of the open mic speech competition, winning a prize money worth BDT 50,000; Samia Sharmin Biva from University of Asia Pacific, and Sharia Ahad from World University of Bangladesh were declared first and second runner-ups, winning BDT 30,000 and 20,000 respectively.

“We would like to thank Manusher Jonno Foundation for giving us the opportunity to help execute this campaign. We extend our gratitude to our guests and partners, as we look forward to do big in the future with this event. This project comes with a message that serves all of humanity, so everybody present here is a winner,” expressed Mirza Wahiduzzaman, CEO, Event Exposure.

Kazi Akib Bin Asad is Sub-editor and Events Coordinator of SHOUT, The Daily Star.