

TOMORROW'S BUSINESS LEADERS, ARISE!

KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

The largest FMCG company in the country, Unilever's drive and passion to find the best young minds in business has produced some unforgettable memories over the years. Through their unique student-focused business competition "BizMaestros" – celebrating its tenth year in 2019 – many have found their footing in the corporate world, and success followed them here and abroad.

Since it first began in 2010, Unilever BizMaestros has promised the university students and delivered upon the thrill of real business; they have groomed the participants to take on real business challenges, even before they officially join the workforce. And therefore, in the last decade, BizMaestros has morphed into a full-fledged business experience, bringing the leaders of tomorrow, today.

This year's theme for BizMaestros was "Purpose-led, Future-fit", defining the way Unilever carries out its business operations around the world. For over three months, the participants worked with various purpose-driven brands of Unilever Bangladesh to create a future-fit business model for each brand. The initial round of the competition focused on "Brands with Purpose" and after a tough call by the jury panel, the Top 20 teams qualified for Round 2.

The second round focused on "Unstereotype" where students had to provide solutions that would help women rise above judgments and stereotypes, targeting two iconic Unilever brands – LUX and Fair & Lovely. Participants were posed with the challenge to overcome everyday societal stereotypes with the help of these two brands.

At the end of the round, the Top 10 teams were forwarded to Round 3, where they worked on another theme: "Enhancing Childhood". The teams here worked with Surf Excel, a brand that recognises the importance of early childhood development and encourages children to engage in real play. The challenge

was to generate creative solutions for the top-tier detergent brand to drive citizen-led campaigns and create a social movement to support "free play."

And finally on October 31, 2019 at the Radisson BLU Dhaka Water Garden, the Top 5 teams — We Got This from IBA, DU; Nox from BUP; Goal Diggers from FBS, DU; One Last Ride from IBA, DU; and Neophytes from IBA, DU — faced off in the ultimate challenge, where they battled it out for the title of Champions of Unilever BizMaestros 2019.

The final round was about building a "Future-fit" business. The participants gathered first-hand market insights from various micro-retailers who manage small neighbourhood groceries and are an integral part of Unilever's business. Teams were mentored by senior managers of Unilever Bangladesh, who helped refine their solutions and prepared them for the grand finale.

The final assessment was carried out by a panel of industry experts consisting Kedar Lele, CEO and Managing Director of Unilever Bangladesh; KSM Minhaj, Customer Development Director of Unilever Bangladesh; Michael Patrick Foley, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Grameenphone; and Sonia Bashir Kabir, Founder and Chairman of SBK Tech Ventures & SBK Foundation.

Sakshi Handa, Human Resources Director of Unilever Bangladesh Limited, inaugurated the ceremony with a welcome note to the judges, esteemed faculty members, partici-

pants, and their families.

She said, "We envision ourselves as the global leader of sustainable business, by embedding purpose in everything that we do. We will demonstrate how our purpose-led, future-fit business model drives superior performance by consistently delivering financial results. As we ourselves embrace this new strategy, we thought BizMaestros 2019 would be the perfect occasion to bring the young minds of the nation along with us on this journey of rewriting the rules of business in this changing landscape."

After beating 95 teams from the top universities across the country, Team Nox lifted the champion's trophy of Unilever BizMaestros 2019. The team, consisting of Shoaib Hussain, Labib Ahsan Rhythm and Anika Rahman from Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP), will now represent Bangladesh at the Unilever Future Leaders' League 2020 in London, where they will take on the brightest minds of the world. The members of the champion team will also be fast-tracked to the Unilever Future Leaders Programme (UFLP), the management trainee recruitment initiative by Unilever.

Team Nox won the show by designing a platform to connect shoppers, retailers and Unilever to provide data-based superior value using a low friction digital intervention with minimal disruption. They proposed a simple, future-fit solution of utilising voice recognition to insert a better tool for recordkeeping

without disrupting the existing dynamic of quick shopper-retailer interactions.

Team We Got This consisting of Salwa Islam Twinkle, Syeda Silvana Jahir and Fatema Nashrah from Institute of Business Administration, University of Dhaka (IBA, DU) and Team Goal Diggers consisting of Ziad Al Noman Pranto, Farah Hoque and Fahmid Chowdhury from Faculty of Business Studies, University of Dhaka (FBS, DU) achieved the title of first runners-up and second runners-up respectively.

The first runners-up team came up with "Hishab Nikash", a complete micro-retail solution that had two major components: Lift, which focused on efficient inventory management and record keeping; and Uni Taka, a credit wallet available to retailers for purchases.

The second runners-up proposed Project Doorway, which aimed to develop a predictive shopping experience that is more intimate and personal, which would ultimately reshape the traditional retail landscape into a more holistic retail ecosystem.

The festivities ended on a celebratory note with the champions who will be gearing up for a bigger challenge on the global platform of Future Leaders' League and preparing themselves to bring home the title of the ultimate champions.

Kazi Akib Bin Asad is Subeditor and Events Co-ordinator of SHOUT, The Daily Star.

"Unilever BizMaestros 2019 has made October one of the most challenging, educational, and on top of all that also a very enjoyable time of my life. Winning the competition has made all our hard work pay off and we couldn't be happier. We are very grateful for the opportunity and our success."

SHOAIB HUSSAIN

"It's such an intense competition that we wanted our presentations to be perfect. We were anxious about our last minute preparations, but thankfully our confidence emerged as we progressed onwards. As a team, we have participated in many other contests and so our team chemistry played positively into our performance."

LABIB AHSAN RHYTHM

"With the Future Leaders' League in March 2020, representing Bangladesh and BUP is both an exciting and daunting prospect. BizMaestros was an eye-opening experience that has exposed us to the real business world, and winning it was all the boost we needed. And now, we're polishing up on our skills for the challenges that lie ahead."

ANIKA RAHMAN

