

■ OFF CAMPUS ■

ZAMIL NOWSHAN'S journey to the UN Summit of The Future

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As the echoes of history lingered in the air, Safayet Zamil Nowshan entered the General Assembly Hall of the UN, where great leaders like Nelson Mandela, Che Guevara, and Fidel Castro once set foot. In the assembly hall, leaders and diplomats from around the globe gathered for a cause: the future of world governance.

"I missed my heartbeat when I entered the room. As a student of International Relations, it was a dream come true for me," said Nowshan. "I've always read about the activities of the Security Council, Trusteeship Council, and other UN bodies. But coming here, after the July revolution, letting the world know about it as well as the role that the global youth will play in standing against injustice through my speech in front of so many leaders for peace certainly felt surreal."

Summit of the Future has been tagged as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reimagine the multilateral system. Explaining the importance of this summit Nowshan said, "After months of tough negotiations, member states adopted the Pact for the Future and its annexes: the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations. These outcomes demonstrate that even amid conflicts, polarisation, and distrust, member states remain determined to act collectively to 'bring multilateralism back from the brink' as the UN Secretary-General António Guterres stressed following the adoption of the Pact."

Born in Bijoynagar, Brahmanbaria, Nowshan, currently, a student at Chittagong University, is pursuing his Master's in International Relations. Apart from his studies, his passion for activism for the rights of young people led him to global events where he represented Bangladesh.

"From school life, I pretty much enjoyed everything apart from my studies, including voluntary work," expanded Nowshan. His early days in extracurriculars began with scouting and the Bangladesh National Cadet Corps (BNCC). In the ninth grade, he joined the National Children's Task Force (NCTF).

"NCTF was involved in various social works like distributing clothes to children during both Eid and winter. I was more interested in working on children's issues probably because I was a child myself."

In late 2019, Nowshan joined Youth Engagement for Sustainability as a member and became its organisational secretary in 2021. "I got the chance to collaborate with national and international organisations like Plan International, Ain O Salish Kendra, Aparajeyo Bangladesh, and Save the Children through which I gained valuable experience by organising and participating in national conferences on youth rights," he added.

Finally, in 2023, he had his first international experience by attending Plan International's Young Citizens Scorecard training in Nepal. "This marked the beginning of my international journey where I represented Bangladesh at a meeting in Sweden, discussing the necessity of youth engagement in decision-making processes with key institutions like SWEDISH SIDA and Swedish Parliament members in June 2023," he explained.

"Later, I was selected as a Youth Advisory Group Member of the UN Office of the High Commissioner

for Human Rights, allowing me to speak at the Asia Pacific Regional Dialogue on Human Rights in Bangkok. In December 2023, I participated in the 25th EU NGO Forum on Human Rights and the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Due to my growing role and experience with youth rights globally, I was invited to the UN Summit of the Future," said Nowshan.

He thinks that the scope of Bangladeshis attending these international conferences is huge as the current global development trend is focused on the inclusion of young people in different aspects, specifically from the global south.

"All international organisations, including the United Nations are committed to ensuring youth participation from all the regions of the world. Moreover, when it comes to global discussion, it is mostly the global south that is affected by a lot of decisions," he added.

In Bangladesh, mostly people from social science or arts backgrounds attend these types of global events. But Nowshan thinks people from STEM should also give them a try, "These conferences mostly call for young and passionate activists working to resolve any social issue regardless of their major. Yes, there are a few issue-specific roles in some cases, but the only criterion is to have relevant experience. For example, if you want to join the Conference of the Parties (COP), you must have some field-level experience about climate change and adaptation issues."

While youth volunteering has increased in Bangladesh, Nowshan believes global representation remains limited due to an information gap. He advised young people to follow organisations' social media for recruitment updates and platforms like Opportunities for Youth and Youth Opportunities to look for international opportunities.

Nowshan also shared tips for aspirants from underprivileged communities who're aiming to attend global conferences and increase their chances, "You've to make ground and gather experience of volunteering at different levels. Start from your community, work on issues that you care and feel passionate about and try to make an impact. You need a story about how you've started, why you're passionate about this issue, and how you've impacted people's lives."

Nowshan will be joining the first committee meeting of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in late October as a UN Youth Champion for Disarmament of UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA). In November, he is hoping to attend the Disarmament and Non-proliferation Conference in South Korea where he wishes to let the voice of the youth not only be heard but valued at the highest

levels of decision-making.

The author is an aimless wanderer who considers himself a lost cause. Tell him to stop living in his imagination at mursalunlakum@gmail.com

