NOTICE BOARD

BRAC and BRAC University empower youth through 'The Way'

BRAC and BRAC University (BRACU) organised a youth engagement programme titled "The Way" ("Agamir Poth" – The Path to the Future) at the university's Merul Badda campus on August 24. The daylong event featured interactive talks, panel discussions, debates, showcasing of youth-led initiatives alongside BRAC's programmes, film screenings, music therapy, and various other engaging activities. The core objective of the initiative was to inspire the youth to embrace leadership, innovation, and advocacy while creating new opportunities for personal and societal development.

Around 250 students from different universities and educational institutions attended, alongside members of the BRAC Youth Programme, young professionals, development partners, media representatives, and officials from BRAC and BRAC University.

In the interactive session titled "The Science of Finding a Way", Asif Saleh, Executive Director of BRAC, stated, "Don't get boxed into what society tells you. Find your own way. You can make things happen as a change-maker, regardless of the profession you are in."

Highlighting the journey of BRAC's founder, the late Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, as well as lessons from BRAC's constantly evolving solutions ecosystem of development programmes and social enterprises, he stressed the importance of aiming for ambitious goals and committing to long-term change.

Professor Syed Ferhat Anwar, Vice-Chancellor of BRAC University, answered questions from the audience and reflected that true fulfilment lies in giving, which becomes possible when individuals identify gaps and innovate to address them.

In a "SparkTalk" segment, visually impaired student Wity Roy from Chila Union in Mongla, Bagerhat, shared her story of resilience and determination.

A parliamentary-style debate was organised by BRAC University Debate Club, followed by a panel discussion titled "Beyond One Way", featuring Tajdin Hassan, Chief Business Officer at The Daily Star; Nishat Anjum Palka, Chief Executive Officer of Mommy Kidz; and Bashira Harun, Chairman of It's Humanity Foundation.

Another highlight was "The Way of Harmony", featuring music by Armeen Musa and her team. Additionally, "Design Quest: Solve for Society" was conducted by MekaTeam, a social startup that works on design and facilitates game-based pedagogy.

The event also hosted exhibitions of youth-led innovations alongside BRAC's initiatives. It also featured various projects and initiatives by different BRACU clubs.

Participants of BRAC's Water Hackathon and Amra Notun Network (ANN) presented three projects – Jotner Dokan, "Eco Care", and "Ujjibon" – all designed to address social challenges.

Initiatives from the Climate Change Programme (CCP), Urban Development Programme (UDP), BRAC Institute of Educational Development (BIED), Integrated Development Programme (IDP), Ultra-Poor Graduation Programme (UPGP), Social Empowerment and Legal Protection (SELP), and BRAC Limb and Brace Centre (BLBC) were also exhibited.

Mental health support services "Moner Jotno" and BRAC International (BI) showcased their operations.

In a session "Always a Way – The Human Library", BRAC University alumni, BRAC Young Professionals (BYP) programme members, and the ANN shared their life experiences and personal stories.

NSU VC calls for redefining global leadership in social business at a conference in Bangkok

Prof. Abdul Hannan Chowdhury, Vice-Chancellor of North South University (NSU) and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Grameen Bank, addressed the International Conference on Global Leadership in Social Business Innovation: Sustainability, Science and Technology, and Entrepreneurship as a Keynote Speaker between August 28 and 29 in Bangkok, Thailand. This conference marks the inaugural gathering of Chulalongkorn University's Yunus Centre at the Social Research Institute.

In his keynote address, Prof. Chowdhury highlighted several crucial themes, including defining global leadership in social business, sustainability as a core imperative, entrepreneurship as the engine of change, the finance and fintech imperative, building resilient social business ecosystems, measuring impact beyond traditional metrics, and concluded with a call to action for shared value creation.

He stated, "Social business is the bridge between profit and purpose. It is not charity, nor conventional capitalism, but a revolutionary approach that solves human problems while sustaining itself financially. It envisions enterprises designed to address human needs rather than generate wealth for shareholders."

During his visit to Thailand, Prof. Chowdhury, on behalf of NSU, attended a collaboration meeting with Assumption University and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on August 27. On the same day, he also signed an MoU with Sasin Business School, followed by another MoU with the CUSRI of Chulalongkorn University on August 28, all representing NSU.

IUB FACULTY MEMBER DEVELOPS NOVEL METHOD TO PREVENT FUNGAL INFECTION IN MUSHROOM CULTIVATION

Mushroom cultivation has been expanding rapidly across both rural and urban Bangladesh. Yet, farmers often face one persistent challenge: fungal contamination.

To address this problem, Dr Jebunnahar Khandakar, an associate professor in the Department of Life Sciences at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), has developed an innovative method to prevent fungal infections. After nearly three years of research and experimentation, she has designed a process that halts the spread of harmful fungi without compromising yield, while also ensuring safety for both the environment and human health.

"My aim was to create something that farmers can easily use. The yield remains intact while the risk of infection decreases significantly," said Dr Khandakar.

Spawn bags — plastic packets filled with substrate and mushroom seeds — are the foundation of mushroom cultivation. Substrate is a bed of organic matter, such as sawdust, rice straw, or other plant residues, that provides nutrients on which mushrooms grow. But once a bag becomes infected, the fungus can quickly spread to other bags, jeopardising the entire harvest.

Bangladesh's hot and humid climate makes substrates particularly vulnerable to fungal growth. Traditionally, substrates are sterilised through autoclaving or pasteurisation. However, if contamination appears

afterwards, it is nearly impossible to control. Fungicides may offer temporary relief, but they also carry environmental and health risks.

Dr Khandakar's solution lies in using partially composted sawdust instead of untreated sawdust. In her method, 50 kilograms of dry sawdust is moistened to maintain 50 to 60 percent humidity, piled into stacks, and covered with jute sacks to keep internal temperatures within 50 to 60°C. The stacks are turned every three days, with water added if necessary. Within 9–12 days, the sawdust is converted into partially composted substrate.

This process reduces the amounts of free sugars in sawdust—nutrients that harmful fungi thrive on—while improving porosity, air circulation, and water retention. The result is a substrate environment favourable for mushroom growth but hostile to invasive fungi.

"In essence, I tried to mimic nature," Dr Khandakar explained. "Mushrooms naturally grow on partially decomposed organic matter. We recreated that environment in a controlled, scientific way."

Dr Khandakar earned her BSc and MS from Bangladesh Agricultural University. She completed her PhD at Nagasaki University, Japan, in 2014 and has been teaching at IUB since 2016. With nearly two decades of experience researching mushrooms, she conducted this latest work with support from the Mushroom Development Institute.

Commenting on the achievement, Dr K Ayaz Rabbani, Dean of the School of Environment and Life Sciences at IUB, said, "For sustainable agriculture in Bangladesh, such innovations are crucial. If farmers adopt this method, it will boost their income, increase production, and contribute positively to food security. We are proud that university research is reaching the field."

Experts note that this method could reduce financial risks for farmers, ensure year-round sustainable cultivation, and stabilise prices in the market. As supply expands, consumers will benefit from easier access to this highly nutritious food, while cultivators will enjoy more secure livelihoods.