

# The Daily Star

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## SHAPING TOMORROW'S LEADERS

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*Photo Courtesy: IABC BRAC UNIVERSITY*

The Model United Nations scene in Bangladesh has seen some rapid growth over the last few years but BRAC University Global Model United Nations (BUGMUN) 2014, held from 17th to 21st January, 2014, has superseded all its predecessors. Attended by over 410 students and young professionals as delegates and executive board members from Bangladesh as well as other countries like Costa Rica, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Indonesia and India, BUGMUN 2014 was a vibrant conference that has become the new epitome of MUN-ing in Bangladesh. The theme of the conference was "POST 2015: Envisioning a better future for the world."

The opening ceremony of the event took place at Army Golf Garden, Dhaka on the morning of 17th January. The chief guest Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, KCMG, Founder and Chairperson of BRAC, and Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of BRAC University, inaugurated BUGMUN 2014.



*Photo: Darshan Chakma*

"Students attending these conferences are enthusiasts who take part in the discussion for the development of countries and its people. Involvement of youth in global projects as such, builds stronger bonds between nations," said Sir Abed in his inaugural speech.

Also present at the opening ceremony as special guests were Lee Yun-young, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, and Professor Ainun Nishat, Vice Chancellor, BRAC University.

From there, the delegates, executive body members and organisers were all taken to BRAC University's residential campus in Savar, where comfortable accommodation was provided for the attendees. The campus and BRAC CDM served as the site for the committee sessions of BUGMUN 2014.

This year's BUGMUN had 12 committees: Social, Cultural and Humanitarian Affairs Committee; Security Council; African Union; European Union; Human Rights Council; The Group of 20; World Trade Organisation; World Health Organisation; Arab League; United Nations Environmental Programme; The Economic and Financial Affairs Council; FIFA-UEFA. Each of the committees was headed by a Dais, consisting of Chair and Co-chair, or President and Vice President. Additionally, there was a Crisis Committee. Delegates would be called at odd times -- even at 4 AM -- and given a crisis case on which they were to work and find solutions.

Prior to the event, each delegate was assigned a committee and country. Agendas were also given to the delegates alongside study guides, so that the delegates would be able to actively participate in the Model UN, and come up with feasible solutions for the discussed agendas. A position paper had to be written by each delegate on the agenda of their committee, based on which awards were later given.

On the evening of the 17th, workshops were held to acquaint first-time MUN-ers with the concept and rules of Model UN. In the informative session, the delegates got a fair idea of how they were to spend the ten committee sessions over the next four days. In the ten committee sessions held for each of the committees, there were vigorous debating over the given topics, a series of moderated and unmoderated caucuses, and incessant negotiations where each delegate tried to defend his/her own country's interest that continued even after the suspension of the sessions. A plethora of ideas came from the young delegates, which were debated over time and again until finally a draft resolution for each agenda was made; after voting, most became resolutions.

Anupoma Niloya, Co-Chair of WHO, said, "BUGMUN is a UN simulation participated by, organised by and conducted by the youth force from four continents, where they become aware of responsibilities on a global level rather than concerning themselves solely with their own smaller communities."

The social nights, however, were different from the rigorous days. On the night of the 18th, a cultural show was held, where singers and dancers performed different types of Bangla folk forms. It was followed by a fire spinning act and a performance by dance troupe "Faceless", alongside bands. The headliner of the evening, however, was Elita Karim and friends, whose upbeat songs and lighthearted jocularities got everyone up and grooving.

The evening of 20th was barbeque night. Delegates and dais members attending BUGMUN 2014 got an opportunity to perform, as the barbeque dinner was made and served for all to enjoy in the cosy ambience of the chilly night. International delegates from Pakistan, Nepal, Costa Rica, etc. sung and danced and thus presented samples of their culture to the audience.



*Photo: Darshan Chakma*

BUGMUN had a Youth Speakers session, where the guest speakers were Maimuna Ahmed, CEO of Teach for Bangladesh, and Korvi Rakshand, Founder of Jaago Foundation.

BUGMUN 2014 ended on 21st January. After a brief committee session in the morning, the delegates got the rest of the day to mingle with others from different backgrounds and cultures.

The Closing Ceremony started at 6 PM, attended by Saida Muna Tasneem, DG (UN), Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Professor Ainun Nishat, Vice Chancellor, BRAC University; Rezaul Huq, COO of Radio Foorti; Khan Ahmed Murshid, Jt. Registrar, BRAC University. In his closing speech, Professor Nishat said, "If there were any lacking in BUGMUN 2014, it wasn't the fault of the organisers; I, as the head of this institute, take responsibility of that."

The Award Ceremony came next. Four awards were given to delegates from each committee: Best Delegate, Outstanding Delegate, Special Mention and Best Position Paper. The Chair or President of the committees announced the awardees from their respective committees and the mentioned guests handed over the trophies. The night concluded with a gala and fireworks.

"BUGMUN for me was a roller coaster joyride with no brakes in the middle. It was fast, exciting, ruthless and sometimes even scary. Best time of my life," informed Tahmeed Alam, a delegate and an awardee.

Another delegate, Tahsin Rashid Trisha, described, "BUGMUN 2014 for me is synonymous to the residential campus, friends, life, laughter, a different world, work, finding a new chapter, and creating great memories with wonderful experiences."

BUGMUN 2014 was organised by International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) of BRAC University. IABC is an international organisation headquartered in USA and the only chapter in Bangladesh is at BRAC University. Country's first international Chair abroad, Founder and President of IABC BRAC University, and Secretary General of BUGMUN 2014, Ratul Dev said, "MUN is a lifestyle for youths who believe in change, peace, development, global brotherhood, justice and equality. I am glad that BUGMUN served as a platform for youths to convey their messages to the world. MUN is not about winning awards or just developing friendship, it's a podium to let your voice be heard." He also added his gratefulness to TARC Management, for their hard work and support behind this conference.

The partners for BUGMUN were Channel i, The Daily Star, Prothom Alo, Ennvision, Beatnik, United Nations Information Center, Radio Foorti, South Asian Youth Society, Youth TV, Nescafe, Knorr Soup, Youth Opportunities, and Asian Textiles. BRAC University Global Model United Nations 2014 has taken the standard of MUN in Bangladesh to a greater altitude. Not only was this a trendsetter but also a benchmark for any youth conference in Bangladesh. Hopefully, it'll only get better.