

German sojourn

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It is always a matter of great learning when we go outside classrooms, beyond borders and shake-off one-sided perspective on issues. The same degree of wisdom was imparted to all of us who attended the Model United Nations Conference organised by the University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany from June 7 to June 12, 2010.

This conference was an academic simulation of the United Nations that provided learning cum training platform for participants on subjects like global polity, economy, diplomacy and international affairs. What made it even more interesting was that participants were made to research countries other than their own, and then discuss international issues related to these countries. Based on this we deliberated with each other, and in the process sought to develop solutions to world problems.

There are UN simulation conferences being held world over wherein one can apply. I selected Duisburg, Germany, to have a closer understanding of the German society and polity. Like India, it has a federal political set-up, and it is playing a pivotal role in European Union, even though it was politically and economically brought down to its knees after the Second World War. Moreover, India has always had cordial relations with this nation. When I reached there, the country had lots to offer to fuel my curiosity further.

What followed it was the whole exercise of working in teams and dealing with internationally relevant issues. We were divided in different committees and asked to choose separate countries that we would later represent. We learnt to see the point of view of the 'other'. Being from a developing country like India which has a federal

set-up, I was delighted to be allotted South Africa in the G20 committee, as both nations have a shared history. We were asked to familiarise ourselves with the political system, economic set up, socio-cultural milieu to enable ourselves to debate in favour of issues scheduled for the committees to work upon.

Our committee, the G20 committee deliberated upon the global financial system, suggesting that it needed to be reformed and that we require common standards in tertiary education. During these deliberations, it was interesting to note that problems around the world are more or less the same — people wanted peace, jobs, social equity and sustainable development. Just that somewhere the global leaders need to make an effort to unite and strike a common chord. We also had panel discussions post committee sessions wherein issues of the European Union, Climate Change, and Indo-China etc were taken up.

STUDENT SPEAK

We also had a global village party at the beginning of this conference with its informal air. Food and cultural performances from different parts of globe showcased the variety of different nations. It emphasised how nations need to move beyond hard power and rely more on soft power to acquire international prowess. I was lucky to have performed 'Jai-Ho' from the movie *Slumdog Millionaire*.

The closing ceremony saw all other participants craving for more. It was a once in a lifetime experience to acquaint myself with German ethos and pick the best that they had to offer. To some this experience might be an added feature on their resumes and to others a valuable international exposure — but transcending these narrow notions, such experiences teach you how to find your footing in a rapidly evolving world.

— As told to Surbhi Bhatia