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Majority should speak out for the minority

Speakers say at BYLC's Youth Leadership Summit



From left, Manusher Jonno Foundation Executive Director Shaheen Anam, Advisor to Chakma Circle Chief Rani Yan Yan, Disability and Development Consultant Nafeesur Rahman and Star Weekend Magazine Editor at The Daily Star Sushmita S Preetha at the discussion yesterday. Photo: Star

Speakers at 'Youth Leadership Summit 2018' yesterday said that authorities should aptly address problems and challenges of the country's disadvantaged and marginalised groups to ensure their inclusion in the development process.

They also stressed the need for change in the mindset towards these groups including ethnic minorities, physically and mentally-challenged individuals.

The panel discussion on "Fostering Inclusiveness" was part of Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center's (BYLC) three-day summit which began at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka on Thursday.

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Some 400 youths, including university students and young professionals from different corners of the country, are attending the event, according to organisers. The Daily Star is strategic partner of the programme.

Moderating the discussion, Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, said that the majority population of the country has to be vocal to ensure the rights of the minority.

“We have to decide what kind of society we want. Do we want an inclusive society where each person’s rights have been guaranteed or a society where some people have all the rights while most are left behind?” she asked.

Nafeesur Rahman, a disability and development consultant, said that like any other human being, differently-abled persons too have their rights.

It is possible to send about 70 percent of the country’s children with disabilities to regular educational institutions and ensure their inclusiveness, he said.

“We have to understand that disability is normal,” he added.

On addressing challenges faced by indigenous people, Rani Yan Yan, advisor to the Chakma Circle Chief, said ethnic minority groups have been repressed for decades as they were ousted from their ancestral homes and their lands were also grabbed in the name of development.

Besides publishing stories of violence against indigenous women, media should also tell stories of their struggles and “the process that is leaving them disempowered”, said Sushmita S Preetha, editor of Star Weekend Magazine at The Daily Star.

At a panel discussion on “Employment: The Future of Work”, Rubana Huq, managing director of Mohammadi Group, said as global job market is stepping into the “era of automation”, the Bangladesh government should take it into consideration and make policy to this end to cope with future challenges.