

10th Commonwealth Youth Parliament,
Delhi, India
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Report by Rhian Shillabeer and Talulah Thomas

Introduction

Words by Rhian Shillabeer

The Commonwealth Youth Parliament is an event that brings young people from over 53 countries together. The event is designed to involve the opinions and leadership of young people in the international political sphere. Participants are involved in a mock parliament and are expected to amend bills and legislature. Our roles were to be the representatives



for Wales and uphold a gold standard of representation and to educate those around us on the work that the Welsh Youth Parliament have been doing. At the same time, once the event had started all affiliation was dropped and we became concerned only with our assigned party and roles within that. The event was split into 3 days, with each having a structured agenda and specific aims. However, the events are also much broader than simply a political gathering. We were able to be involved in a number of varying cultures, some of which we were unfamiliar

with, and able to make international friends for life. Although this annual gathering is primarily an opportunity for youth involvement in politics, it is also much more than that.

Over the 3 days that we were in India we were involved in a very detailed and realistic mock parliament involving making amendments to Bills and putting forward resolutions.



We were also immersed in Indian culture with constant cultural influences such as performances and local food alongside politics. Overall, this programme offered us not only an insight into how real political entities work, but also allowed us to have a clearer understanding of different cultures and lifestyles. I can confidently speak for both Talulah and I when I say that this trip has not only been educational in terms of our political knowledge but also in terms of our world

understanding. This trip has produced friends for life and memories for life which we will take into our futures, politically related or not.



Day 1

Words by Talulah Thomas

The big day had arrived! Our journey as Hon'ble Members of Commonwealthland Youth Parliament began with an introduction of Mentors and Participators, giving each individual a chance to get to know one another alongside seeking knowledge from the Mentors and Speakers on the Delhi Legislative Assembly. From these introductory and orientation sessions, we gained further insight into the role of Legislature, Legislatives and the key functionaries for Legislative devices, procedures and political parties.

Our afternoon session involved a formal inauguration of the 10th Commonwealth Youth Parliament at the Delhi Legislative Assembly. This monumental event included a Welcome Address delivered by Shri Ram Niwas Goel, Hon'ble Speaker, Delhi Legislative Assembly. Thereafter, Shri Arvind Kejriwal, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Delhi and Ms. Emilia Monjowa Lifaka, MP, Hon'ble Chairperson, CPA Executive Committee delivered their addresses as the Guests of Honour. Shri Om Birla, Hon'ble Speaker, Lok Sabha, the Chief Guest delivered his inaugural address in the Assembly Haul, formally inaugurating the Youth Parliament.



The navigation of legislative and parliamentary processes began as all newly elected Members were welcomed and the House addressed by the Hon'ble Speaker of Commonwealthland, Fasiha Hasaan. Following this, an oath was taken by Members in unison declaring that we as Members will fulfill the responsibility to protect the interest of the nation (Commonwealthland) and our people. Listening to Commonwealth's

President's Address, he stated that he believed that each member will "discharge their duty with utmost probity, diligence and sincerity." The President's Address also educated us on the characteristics, issues and challenges of Commonwealthland, this ensured all Members were fully aware of the kind of Government the Opposition would ultimately be challenging. These inaugurations and addresses delivered to the House by formal guests and Hon'ble Speakers gave us an insight into parliamentary formal proceedings, this was an experience both Rhian and I had never had before. These proceedings gave us a chance to fully immerse ourselves into the ongoing events within the parliamentary system. A discussion on motion of thanks on the President's Address was moved by the Hon'ble Minister "That this House expresses its gratitude to the Hon'ble President for his address delivered to the Parliament on 25 November 2019". This certain parliamentary proceeding was also something we had never experienced before, like many of the formal systems we encountered as Members of the Youth Parliament.

The day progressed as we divided into our Parliamentary roles as Members, Talulah practicing the role of a relatively right-wing Minister for Social Welfare within the ruling party, Rhian as a feisty more liberal Member of the Opposition - we could tell things were going to get very interesting indeed! Now that the parties and roles within them had been established, it was time to get moving and begin our preparatory questions and answers, amendments to the Climate Fund Bill and special mentions ready for the following days' events.

Day 2

Words by Talulah Thomas

Looking back, Day 2 of the Commonwealth Youth Parliament's proceedings was when the most informative events and debates took place, they were a vital part of our learning curve as Youth Parliamentarians. We began by addressing the House through the process of 'Special Mentions', highlighting issues and challenges facing our Parliament. Even though many of these issues were imaginative, without a doubt they coincided with many of the issues facing a lot of the countries representing at the CYP. This allowed us to gain

Special Mention:

A member of my constituency St.Thompso has come to me and highlighted that they are very passionate about policy making and being in the driver seat as it relates to youth development and participation in politics along with positive things.

However when consulted the government, he was told that youth investment in politics is a mockery of the system and mediocre. This was also mentioned in the session yesterday by Minister Jones.

The opposition strongly believes in youth development, entrepreneurship and leadership. We are hereby concerned that if this government doesn't allow for youth participation now, when we the current leaders are dead and gone there will be chaos and no order on commonwealth land.

Mr. Tyrell Giles

an insight into global issues we perhaps did consider exist or are ongoing, coming from a developed country. The experience of being able to discuss and expand our understanding of the wide range of issues facing under-developed countries and nations has really opened our eyes to global politics, perhaps one could say in a rather unique way.

Special Mention:

Thank you madam speaker, during past 3 years, I had an opportunity to present many a social issues in the house. the most important issues in were concerning women and child abuse. today i am presenting issue related to mental health.as the c. S. Lewis quoted "Mental pain is less dramatic than physical pain, but it is more common and also harder to bear. The frequent attempt to conceal mental pain increases the burden: it is easier to say "My tooth is aching" than to say "My heart is broken."

In today's time 2443 people are affected by mental health on daily basis in 1 lakh population. I want to tell you madam, this section is the most marginalised and neglected in our society. they include mentally issues like depression and even those who have these challenges from birth. I would like to request our honorable health minister to formulate some policies which will increase financial assistance in form of Healthcare Centres which are specialised in mental health and even some regular health checkup in every area possible so that all get the benefit of it, leaving no one behind.The people affected from mental issue constitution about 5 crore of our population, deserves special care and protection! request the government to immediately take steps in this regard. I am thankful to you madam speaker for allowing me to raise this issue on the floor of the house. thank you madam.

Sonam Gupta

Special Mention:

Madam speaker, young people's participation in politics in commonwealth land is at an all time low. Those young people who are less educated or from an ethnic minority background are even less likely to believe they can have any influence in politics.

But opportunities to understand how politics and democracies work, or the ability to speak and be heard, are few and far between for many young people. The media and political establishment has failed to properly engage with young people.

But to all the young people of the commonwealth land: your opinion matters and it is a failure of this house that you feel so alienated from the political system.

So I am advocating that citizenship and politics be made a core part of the curriculum in state education. We have to give young people the tools they need and deserve to contribute to our democracy as their opinions are just as valuable as anyone else's.

If this house can work together, to get behind an issue I'm sure we all really care about, I'm hopeful things can change for the better for young people.

Banseka Kayembe

Special Mention:

Thank you madam speaker, for providing me an opportunity to raise a matter of urgent public importance in the house. I would like to speak about the state of female literacy in our nation, the Commonwealthland.

The woman have a mere 60 percent literacy rate, in comparison to the other gender, with a whooping 80 percent. Female literacy doesn't only have an intrinsic value, but also instrumental value attached to it. Quoting a recent interaction, in one of the constituency of Commonwealthland, how being illiterate, and belonging to a poor household, she was forcibly married to a groom much elder than her, and how she barely manages to support her family, after his demise. It reflects how being illiterate, she is unable to come out of the darkness which surrounds her. Being educated, makes a female, self-dependent, gives her the freedom to protect herself from any kind of oppression or injustice against her. Talking about the instrumental value, attached to it, more educated female population, implies more female working force; leading to a rise in GDP as well. Also, it is the multi-dimensional impact which I want the house to focus on i.e. being a mother, if female is more educated, she can better take care of her child, apply the medical procedure properly, a working woman implies more financial resources are available with the family, so the household can devote more resources to the child care. Hence, it simultaneously fights with the widespread problem of child-mortality and poverty as well. Female literacy implies more informed woman, hence a better society, more tolerable for both gender. It would open the new corridors of employment opportunities for them. Keeping in view all the great impact, efforts in this direction can have on our economy. I request the house to assign die importance to this, in the Woman and child development bill, proper initiative backed by appropriate funds can do the needful. One of the major step could be to provide education to females, at a subsidized fee, so that it is affordable for all. Additionally, equal workforce behaviour and treatment should be ensured for both the gender.

The next challenge facing us Governing Ministers was to answer the drafted questions by the Opposition party. As a Minister of Social Welfare, I was faced with many questions and scrutiny by Hon'ble Members of the Opposition. I had actually only seen these questions the morning of, so it was a huge challenge to try and think on my feet with little preparation. This part of the experience was thrilling and exhilarating, giving us an insight into issues often raised in Parliament, giving Members of the Opposition the opportunity to scrutinise and challenge the Ruling party, and forcing us Ministers to be accountable for Government's actions and decisions even if we didn't necessarily agree with them as individuals - it really made us sweat!

Questions raised by Hon'ble Member of the Opposition Party, Rhian Shillabeer

Women Literacy Rate

QUESTION NO. 5 Ms. Rhian Shillabeer

Will the Minister of EDUCATION be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government is aware that women are not able to afford private schooling in order to better their literacy rate,
- (b) if so, details thereof, and
- (c) the steps being taken by the Government in order to raise the women literacy rate to meet men's?

Unemployment Rate

QUESTION NO. 15 Ms. Rhian Shillabeer

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government is aware that the unemployment rate is high at 7% in the country,
- (b) if so, the details thereof, and
- (c) the action plan of the Government to reduce the unemployment rate in the country?

Questions raised for the Minister of Social Welfare for the Ruling Party, Talulah Thomas

Upliftment of Unprivileged Women, Men and Community

QUESTION NO. 1 Ms. Nephilian Kasuka

Will the Minister of SOCIAL WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) the challenges identified by the Government for upliftment of unprivileged women, men and community, and
- (b) the manner in which the Government proposes to make sure that unprivileged women, men and community are appropriately considered and supported?

Dependence on Government Subsidies

QUESTION NO. 3 Mr. Naqiuddin Nazrin

Will the Minister of SOCIAL WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) the challenges identified by the Government to encourage less dependence on Government subsidies, and
- (b) the manner in which the Government proposes to tackle these issues?

Women in Politics

QUESTION NO. 6 Mr. Aaron Santos

Will the Minister of SOCIAL WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) the steps being taken by the Government to entice women to get involved in politics?

Our afternoon session included furthering our knowledge and understanding through debating, discussing and voting on our legislative business. The session focused on Hon'ble Minister for Environment Ms. Adriana Jane Lopez moving for leave to introduce a Bill to set up a Climate Fund for Women. This was a bill moved to support women to mitigate the adverse impact of climate change and adapt to climate change. Within this, the idea was to empower them for resilience and adjustment against unfavourable, hostile impacts of climate change on agriculture. As you can tell, this Bill is a very apt and its contemporary relevance was clear to see. I think this was a brilliant idea by the CPA as even though it was an imaginative concept, these are real issues facing many factions within society, especially indigenous groups and tribes facing the repercussions of climate change in this modern age. The Bill actually led to me furthering my study of the effects of climate change on vulnerable groups, which is something I believe young people should be educated on during this fragile age of environmental disarray and corruption within modern politics.



Furthering the debate on the Climate Fund for Women, the Opposition and Independent's Parties both raised amendments and resolutions on the bill. Of which, many were accepted following intense discussions per amendment. However, many were challenged or declined by the Ruling party as a result of our Chief Whip's expertise in the legalities behind amendments raised. This was an excellent experience in terms of gaining a deeper understanding and appreciation for legalities within the Parliamentary system and points of order during debate.

And thus, the results are in!

Each individual Hon'ble Member of the House voted 'For' the bill on a Climate Fund for Women. The experience of debating, challenging and achieving common ground and the ultimate goal in the end was vital to our experience as Youth Parliamentarians as we began to fully understand the system and codes of conduct during Legislative processes. Following the intensity of our experience in the Assembly, we were

cordially invited to a Dinner Programme hosted by Hon'ble Speaker, Delhi Legislative Assembly on the Assembly Lawns. This was a truly immersive experience as we delved into the Host country's culture, with outstanding musical events including many variations of traditional dance. One word: WOW. What an evening!



Day 3

Words by Rhian Shillabeer

It was our last full day in India and emotions were already running rampant. Of course, the day was started by a breakfast in the hotel and a quick and now somewhat familiar bus journey across Delhi to the assembly. On our arrival we were quickly split up into our respective parties in order to have a quick team meeting and go over the agenda for the day. The agenda was to close parliament and summarise all of our work over the last 3 days, to celebrate that work and to have one last round of questions and answers. After the quick team meeting, we took our seats for the last time. Proceedings were pushed through much quicker than previous days as by now all members are familiar with the process of the chamber. Question time, the opposition geared up for the onslaught that they had faced in the previous days. But the atmosphere on the floor was much different today, most questions were met with laughter and a light hearted responses especially towards the leading parties finance minister Hon. Member Lorenzo Carey.

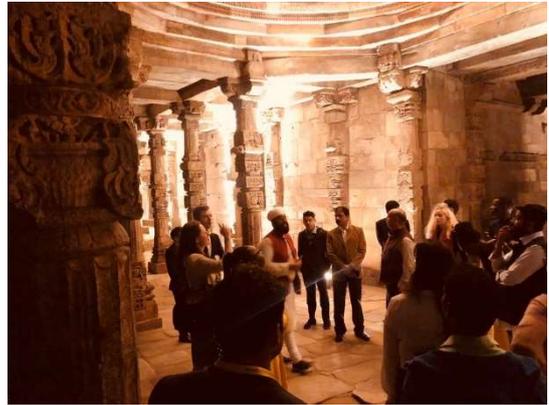


The Speaker then brought forward a vote that the floor was not expecting, a vote on whether the Commonwealth Youth Parliament should continue for years to come. There was no previous discussion about this bill, as the intention was to leave all partisan ties behind and focus on the preservation of youth involvement in politics. The atmosphere on the floor had quickly shifted from light-hearted to

serious in an instant. The speaker produced the bill, read out the contents briefly and then put it to the floor. The prime minister then produced a speech that was both inspiring and very relevant. The speech contained many reasons as to why continuing these events is paramount for the encouragement of youth participation. Our last sitting in Parliament was concluded by closing speeches from leaders of each party. All of these speeches were moving, especially from the honourable minister Joseph Barker who placed emphasis on the friendships that we had all formed and the unity that was being felt by the entire group. To finish off the politics of the trip, we were lucky enough to have a brief talk from the South Africa miss Fasiha. The talk was about her experiences as a young female MP and how she managed to climb to where she got to today.



Moving in from the assembly we had the opportunity to visit one of the oldest parts of Delhi, the Qutub Minar. We were led by a very knowledgeable guide who explained the long history of the area and the buildings within it. Next we attended a magical dinner in the garden of five senses which was one of the most unique experiences I have had. The food was incredible and alongside that there was more dancing with the group and an incredible reception from the hosts. However we couldn't stay long as we all needed to depart quickly for our flights home.



Then came the worst part of the trip, the goodbyes. Talulah and I were one of the first to leave so we had the chance to say goodbye which was a blessing a curse. We managed the best we could to exchange details so we could all stay in contact.

Conclusions

Words by Talulah Thomas



The most important skill I gained from the experience was the deeper knowledge of how the legislative and parliamentary proceedings work. This was never something I was taught at school, I feel I can further engage in politics as I understand more clearly how things work. This has highlighted the reasoning behind why young people don't engage in the political world, I believe it's the lack of education on proceedings and the complexity that often surrounds political events in Parliament. I also learned what it truly means to be a 'Parliamentarian', it doesn't necessarily mean you have to shout and spout facts, statistics and go on a rampage about certain issues to prove your knowledge. I believe to be a Parliamentarian you should have the ability to empower, through compassion and adopting a clear

understanding of **people**. This is something I'd like to share with my fellow Youth Parliament members alongside young people here in Wales.

An experience that solidified why I want to make change and influence decisions made by the 'top dogs' within the realm of politics was a talk held by Fasiha Hassan, South Africa's youngest MEP. I can say with utmost honesty that I have never been so inspired by another's words and reflection of their experiences. We discussed women in politics and the power of youth participation and activism in a very real and authentic way - cutting any of the drivel I often hear by people in positions in power telling young people to engage in politics.

The trip certainly exceeded my expectations. It was challenging as I embarked on activities I'd never done before, thought about challenges and issues I'd never discussed before. However with that challenge has come **confidence**, not only within myself as a young female hoping to go into politics and specialise in human rights, but a confidence within our generation of young people. Even if we don't



necessarily have any legislative power as of yet, we are certainly a generation of activists campaigning for change and hoping to influence decisions. The 10th Commonwealth Youth Parliament Conference is a clear testament to my statement.