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# Youth say yearning for equal society has become stronger as they have seen worst times HOME CONFLICTS, GLOBAL PEACE

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Chandigarh:** Young people participating in the 10th edition of the Global Youth Peace festival feel people-to-people contact is what can keep up peace-making efforts across the globe. And they know it, for, they come from conflicts zones. This backdrop makes their yearning for peace all the more potent and, in a way, tangible too.

"I am a peacemaker from days of Vietnam war and I want to keep peace-making," said Bernie Meyer, known as American Gandhi, setting the tone for the discussion. He said Gandhi's ideals were more relevant now and youth must aspire to create a world free from conflicts.

There are nine delegates from Nepal, including four volunteers, who are participating in the festival. Leading them is Birendra Poudel of the Nepal Friendship Society. "It is a great honour for me to a part of this platform. I got the first opportunity to participate in GPFY in 2013. I work with the Nepal Friendship Society on children's issues. I learnt a lot and implemented it at the local level. We now talk about peace wherever we go," he said.

A delegate from Indonesia

said, "If we talk about peace, it leads us to a discussion on conflict. In Indonesia, the conflict is among people who speak different languages and follow different religions. This camp will help us arrive at definition of peace because it is so ambiguous."

Lots of first-timers hope that the festival will help them understand better the notion of diversity and inclusion and how they are pivotal to the concept of peace. "This

is for the first time that I am attending the conference. I see different people from different nationalities and different religions here. In Egypt, we have two religions—Islam and Christianity. Muslims have all the power in my coun-

try. If everyone loves peace, they will respect different religions," she said.

Alia from Pakistan said, "When we talk about world peace and countries in direct conflict, there is a lot of jingoism that sways in. Countries in direct conflict do not leave a chance of attacking each other: On this trip, I have gone to Ajmer and Agra with friends. Those of us who sit in rooms and try to force stereotypes and biases upon us will never see our country emerge as a global power. I have seen the real India."



Let's do more...  
**GLOBAL YOUTH PEACE FEST**



Photos: Balish Ahuja

## THE SCHEDULE

### DAY 2

- **Bird walk for all GYPF 2015 delegates behind Sukhna Lake | 6 am**
- **Group 1 | 2nd Asia-level regional meet on rights & dignity of women, at Peoples Convention Centre, Sector 36 | 10am**
- **Group 2 | 2nd SAARC Youth Leadership Summit at RGNIID Regional Centre, near Gate 1, PEC, Sector 12 | 10am**
- **Group 3 | Phra Niti, senior monk from Peace Revolution Thailand to take a day-long workshop on inner peace at Punjab Kala Bhawan, Sector 16 | 10am**
- **One world fashion show and multicultural evening at Punjab Kala Bhawan, Sector 16 | 6 pm**



## Making The City More Accessible

Founder of NGO Swayam, Sminu Jindal announced on the opening day that it will work on making the City Beautiful more accessible in association with Yuvsatta. During the course of the peace fest, Swayam will conduct a focused Access Audit Training of 10 pre-identified youth leaders to orient them on the need for accessibility being a prerequisite to enable the elderly and persons with disabilities to participate in the community on an equal basis with others. Post the training session, these youth delegates will conduct an access survey of Old OPD block of PGIMER and GMH, Sector 16, to assess how age friendly their infrastructure is and to suggest solutions to make them accessible to all. "The intent of access audit is to identify barriers that may exist in building in its current state and make recommendations to overcome them," said Jindal.

## 'Came to know I was from Pak, gave juice'

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Giving an instance of the goodness of the Indians, Abid said that while travelling in a bus to India, she was accompanied by an Indian man. After getting to know that she was from Pakistan, he bought her a pack of juice on the way and was being very nice to her. "He explained most of the things about India and asked me to feel like home here," she added.

# 'The idea is to gain respect, not sympathy'

AMARJOT KAUR

Sometimes, a crippled mind can be more incapacitating than any form of physical disability. For those, whose thoughts are blind to the suffering of others never see the beautiful light of compassion! In conversation with Sminu Jindal of Jindal Saw Ltd, a member of the Core Committee on Accessible Tourism, constituted by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, on her second visit to the city shares her views on the accessibility issue in India. "The issue is not only restricted to the disabled; overall growth of the nation cannot take place if needs of the physically challenged are not taken care of," she says.

As she criticises Modi Government's Swacchh Bharat Abhityaan and Beti Padhaao campaign for excluding the disabled, she says, "It is true that every girl has a right to education, but what about those who are physically challenged? There is no facility for them in schools, be it the lack of restrooms for the disabled or the absence of ramps. So, the handicapped have no right to be educated?" she questions.

While talking about her association with Yuvsatta, Sminu, who is also the founder of Swayam, a member of the Screening Committee of National Award for the Welfare of Persons

**NOBLE CAUSE:**  
Sminu Jindal



Sminu Jindal, founder of the NGO Swayam, believes for the overall growth of the nation the physically challenged need to be taken care of

with Disabilities, 2009-10, under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, stresses on the need for having a barrier-free environment. "I remember when we were asked to construct a disabled-friendly infrastructure at Qutub Minar, its revenue and

footfall was twice the total sum of those who visited The Red Fort and Humayun's Tomb," she says while adding that the infrastructure does not only help those who are physically challenged, but also those who are old and have difficulty in walking.

Sminu, along with Yuvsatta, will conduct a workshop for over 250 youth leaders from over 36 nations as part of the 10th Global Youth Peace Fest (GYPF 2015).

"The idea is to sensitise the youth. I feel that there is a need to change the mindset of people more than any-

thing else." Sminu informs that the administration has given her a nod to modify some parts of PGI and GMCH, Sector 16, under the access audit. "In Chandigarh, my focus this time will be on the hospitals and in Delhi we are looking at modifying schools, col-

leges and universities in a way that they are accessible to women, children, elderly and even disabled."

Sminu, who is also a member of the Young Global Leaders (YGL), World Economic Forum and is on the Committee on Functional Requirements in Buildings of Bureau of Indian Standards, Government of India, says, "All it takes from the administration and society in general is to widen the width of the doors to 900 mm and build ramps along with making restrooms for the physically challenged." She strongly criticizes the idea of having a separate compartment for the handicapped. "If you have a bunch of physically challenged or elderly people in a compartment, they will be bullied by the goons."

She also shares that most of the time people have mental barriers that restrict them from using accessible infrastructure. "People show off their jewels that make them look pretty, but they will hide their hearing aid. I feel it's easier to be dependent on a walker or a wheelchair than being dependant on people. The idea is to gain respect, not sympathy. Remember that time when glasses were looked down upon—girls with glasses don't get passes—and now they have become a fashion symbol. I believe that with effort, things will change," she signs off.

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