

Two students from IMSciences, Ms. Aliza Habib and Ms. Mahnoor Ahmad, were selected out of a total of ten students from all over Pakistan for the National University of Singapore (NUS) Enterprise Summer Programme on Entrepreneurship 2018. The students were recommended by ALEP, IMSciences along with six other students. Their experiences are shared in the following pages in their own words.

Aliza Habib – Bachelor of Software Engineering, 2nd Semester

I was awoken from my peaceful nap by my friend who urged me to look outside the window. The sun was taking a peek from the horizon behind the plane wing. The sky resembled a prism; all the colors blended into each other. Mellow blues and pinks blurred together. Amongst the clouds was a blush of scarlet and tangerine. The sun was taking its time and the clouds danced around it like a patient muse.

'Not everyone gets to see a view like this.' - I heard the air hostess say.

This was just the beginning of a beautiful journey.

As a writer, never did I think a small report would be one of the hardest things for me to write, not because it's difficult - but because this experience cannot be confined to this little space.

NUS Enterprise Summer Programme on Entrepreneurship 2018 - was something that felt too good to be true. After the interview, I was informed that the shortlisted students have already been picked by the time I arrived. Nonetheless, *Mr. Sikandar Tangi* - coordinator for External Linkages at the *Institute Of Management Sciences* informed me that he'd additionally recommended me too. Kudos to him for believing in me. I feel immensely humbled & blessed to have mentors like him. And that decision of his, my friends, is the moment which acted as a pivot in turning my life upside down - in a good way.

After a series of painstakingly detailed Skype & on-call interviews with the panel from *Habib University & Sajjad Foundation*, I received my acceptance letter on a hot summer day. I remember going stiff for a second. It took me a few reality checks before I could comprehend

what was going on. I had been picked amongst the few ten Pakistani students to attend the prestigious camp at the best Institute from Asia.

As a struggling entrepreneur, this opportunity was nothing short of a perfect summer. To add up to my excitement, I later found out that a fellow friend & colleague, Mahnoor Ahmed, will also be joining me. I low-key felt proud of us for having a chance to represent our institute, and most of all - our country on an international forum.

We were invited to Karachi by Habib University for an orientation by Mr. Sarwar Iqbal & Mr. Zeeshan Zain. They facilitated the entire process from interviews to dropping us to the airport and made sure we were at ease, every step of the way. The night before we left Karachi, we met the rest of the brilliant students who we'd be travelling with. Stories were shared and we bonded over *Karachi kee Biryani* and *Dry Chili with Cherry* at the famous *do-darya* food point. We all had big dreams, humble hearts & stories to tell.

Our flight to Singapore was painfully long with a six-hour layover at Sri Lanka Airport. We killed time by singing songs from back home & later at Singapore Airport by exploring the airport for local cuisine. At National University Of Singapore - we were welcomed by the organizers. NUS-SP divided the participants into clans - a family we had to work with - and gave us our essentials which included our key cards, transport cards, name tags, schedules and most importantly - a map of Singapore. My clan, that we so conveniently named the ***StartUp Mafia***, consisted of individuals from Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Mexico, Cambodia, Australia and well - Pakistan (that was me if you haven't guessed it yet). I got along with my clan right after meeting them. We went out to get a tour of the famous Mustafa Mall - they say there's nothing that you cannot find there.

Unlike conventional camps, NUS-SP encouraged the use of technology & digitized the whole experience using several apps. The one we were using the most was *Gamatize* - with checkpoints & tasks to complete. We were required to post a creative photo of the completed task to earn points. Most of all, NUS-SP encouraged the use of cameras and social media to make sure we get the most out of this experience - a perfect scenario for Gen Z. We completed the amazing race, the heritage race & the food race using a *paper* map instead of virtual one- for the fun of it. Throughout these ventures, we made sure to enjoy every moment. Merlion, Haw Par

Villa, Chinatown, Little India, Gardens by the Bay & Haji Lane are a few places that we visited. I tried Chinese, Malay, Thai, Singaporean & Indonesian cuisine - each of them offered something new and appetizing. Every place, every view took our breath away and was beautiful than the last one.

Along with the exploring, NUS-SP made sure we're fulfilled from an entrepreneurial point of view too. **The Hangar** - *a place where ideas take flight* - acted as our second home. We visited several startups and spoke to some entrepreneurs *up-close-and-personal* to get insights of the ecosystem. During the lectures, we were free to sip coffee and chat with the mentors to ensure a comfortable environment. Amongst my favorite visits were the *DBS Asia* - a digital banking space architecture based off of the Star Wars Enterprise where we met Yoda, *Block71* - a hub for young entrepreneurs and startups, *Timbre+* - a food court with live bands playing every night and *Dignity Kitchen* - a delicious food spot where people with disabilities are trained to work & earn with dignity. The highlight of this visit was definitely *Dragon Boating with Society Staples*. Society Staples focuses on creating awareness about people with disabilities. We learnt dragon boating while in the shoes of those who cannot hear or see. All these experiences instilled empathy & a drive to change the world - for which I'm eternally grateful.

Singapore is a hub for creative solutions, diversity & acceptance. It's a true model for peace & order. Singapore taught me that leadership & creativity are vital for any system to thrive successfully - whether it be a startup or a government. This country has a perfect blend of checks & freedom to assure peace and acceptance. I thought NUS-SP will be a challenge for the introvert in me - but the acceptance & hospitality didn't let that happen. I learnt to feel comfortable & faced my fears throughout this Programme. It enabled me to see beyond the judgment & negativity and helped me embrace my true talents & potential. Dignitaries like Professor Tom Kosnik, Mr. Benedict Cheong, Mr. Ali Hussain and Professor Wong appreciated me individually which was a major confidence boost. I cannot emphasize enough on how incredible this Programme has been for me. In these two weeks, I found inspiration, motivation, love, family and most of all - myself.

I'm humbled & grateful to Allah for enabling IMSciences, Habib University & Sajjad Foundation in giving me a platform to represent my country and experience this beautiful

journey. I hope to give back to this world and to my society what I've learned and live up to my potential.

Mahnoor Ahmad – BS Social Sciences, 2nd Semester

(Quick fun-fact before we begin: The whole city-state of Singapore is smaller than the land area of Islamabad!)

Rarely does an opportunity come along that so perfectly fits your criteria. Summer workshop? In a foreign country? Fully sponsored? YUP! What more could I have asked for? Obviously, aside from the fact that only 80 students from around the world and 10 from Pakistan had to be selected; no biggie, right? The odds didn't seem to be in my favor. I mean, ten people from hundreds of aspirants? I wouldn't bet on myself either, even though I am my own biggest fan. Nevertheless, through some stupendous miracle, I received an acceptance letter after 2 months of continuous face-to-face, Skype and phone interviews. It took a lot of pinching and rereads of the acceptance letter for me to actually come to terms with it. I was ecstatic. Especially after find out that a friend of mine would also be joining me on the educational trip. Odds can be misleading sometimes.

The next month went by in a jiffy and before I knew it, Aliza and I were on our way to Karachi for the orientation at Habib University with sir Zeeshan Zain and sir Sarwar Iqbal, who had so graciously helped us with the entire process and hosted us through the Pakistan-side of this journey. Meeting with the rest of the selected Pakistan students was a pleasure. We all shared stories of our selection process, talked about our universities, our mutual desire to make an impact; you know, all the meeting-for-the-first-time small-talk. It wasn't soon before long that we were onboard the exhausting flight to Singapore. Of course it would have been a lot less tiresome without the six hour layover at Colombo airport but we made up for it by watching two FIFA world cup matches and having a mini-concert in a random café while the Australians eyed us weirdly.

After landing in Singapore we quickly got our essentials, made our way to National University of Singapore and settled into our rooms at Kent Ridge Hall. Later that day, we visited University Town (U-town) with our respective clans. NUS Enterprise took the liberty of dividing

all the 80 participants into clans, with 2 facilitators in each. Each clan had 10 people and almost all of different nationalities. My clan consisted of: three Singaporeans, two Indonesians, one person from Thailand, a Moroccan, an Australian, a Chinese and a Pakistani, me!

NUS-SP took it one step further this year and digitalized the entire summer program by having our daily objectives and accomplishments be shown on a mobile application called Gameatize. Every task that needed to be done would be uploaded on Gameatize and we would rush to complete it, either by uploading a picture of the finished task or by submitting written analysis. Each task, when completed, would give the person points of accomplishment. The clan with the highest scores would always receive some kind of an advantage, which was another incentive to work hard.

The first three days were full of running around, hustling to each checkpoint, taking pictures, experiencing new foods and places and learning how to get around Singapore's bus and train systems. That was because on the first day, we had the NUS Hunger Games where clans had to rush to every cafeteria inside NUS (trust me, there were a lot) and try different types of food. The second day, after the morning lecture, we had the Singapore Amazing Race where the clans raced to different pitstops across Singapore, e.g. the Merlion, the Singapore flyer, Marina Bay Sands, Gardens by the Bay etc., followed by the Singapore heritage challenge on the third day, a contest that required for us to visit numerous heritage sites, like Little India, Haw Par Villa, Chinatown etc.

Throughout the two weeks of NUS-SP 2018: we visited various start-ups, enterprises and companies; met with various venture capitalists and investors and picked their brains about the start-up ecosystem in Singapore and how it can be applied in other countries; participated in various hands-on activities, like Mangrove Learning, where we used drumming to test our cognitive functions, and Dragon Boating, where the team simulated what it would feel like to boat while being deaf and blind, with the objective of developing empathy towards the disabled community; tried diverse varieties of south-Asian food (spoiler alert: the food over there will make you miss Pakistani food); had one-on-one sessions with entrepreneurs of Block 71 (one of them invented the automatic roti maker "Rotimatic") and many more.

Coming to the personal achievements side, and I don't mean to toot my own horn, I had a few here and there. Our clan, Clan 5: The Unpopular Celebrities (yes, I named it), won the challenges of the first week and received a fun pass to visit Sentosa Island! My clan placed second overall, with me having the third highest points amongst all the participants, which we were awarded for. On the last day we had a pitching day where teams had to present their entrepreneurship ideas to a panel of judges and investors. My group was awarded first place! To be fair, our idea was called "DYIDivorce" and that might have gotten the older judges a bit excited.

All the educational learning aside, I learnt numerous other valuable lessons. The biggest one being that in order for a nation to progress and prosper, it is the people who have to bring about a change. Good leadership and governance aside, if the masses don't comply with or facilitate the improvements in the country, there is no way that a sustainable change can be brought about. Two weeks in Singapore changed my entire perspective on interpersonal relations and society/community development. The people there were tremendously kind and selfless, they were accommodating, respectful of the people of other ethnicities and the rules of the country. They showcased the type of behavior that allowed for the foundation of an environment where the communities could thrive and prosper. Certainly, one of the reasons they could accomplish that was by heavily fining people for bad behavior (e.g. \$1000 for littering, smoking in public, catching birds etc.) but the main cause was that they developed their education system in a way that encouraged cultural relativism and social development. It took less than 30 years for Singapore to transform from a third world country to the most developed nation in the world. If they did it, why can't we?

The two weeks I spent at NUS Enterprise Summer Program were, hands down, some of the best moments of my life. I would definitely encourage you to apply for the program and experience the immense pleasure for yourself. It will definitely change you as a person, I know I did.