Junket that helped them sift the truth from the junk

Four city youngsters participated in one of the world's biggest student fests in Norway and came back globalised

From left: Namrata, Hemakshi, Neha and Vivek with a friend (in white), Betty Williams (below)

ARUNDHATI RAMADE

These four students from the city recently returned to India from Norway, concluding the most fulfilling trip of their lives. Things possibly couldn't get better than hanging around with Nobel laureates Betty Williams, Dr Shirin Ebadi, Desmond Tutu and interacting with 400 students from 120 countries. And all this at the northern-most snow-covered nation in the world!

Hemakshi Meghani and Namrata Anirudh, undergraduate students at Foundation for Liberal and Management Education (FLAME), along with MBA students Neha Kedia and Vivek Chidambaram participated in the International Student Festival in Trondheim (ISFIT), Norway. ISFIT is one of the largest student festivals in the world. These students were shortlisted from 4,500 entries from 150 countries.

ISFIT 2009 was held at Trondheim between February 28 and March 1. It was the tenth year of the festival, which is held after every two years.

Besides, Tata, Williams and Dr Ebadi, Chairman of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission Dr Hans Blix and State Secretary in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Raymond Johansen also interacted with the students.

Pune Mirror chatted up with Hemakshi and Neha, who shared their experiences at the student fest in Norway.

MEETING THE GREAT

The four students spent the initial days of their visit meeting with Nobel laureates. Betty Williams: "The evening started with a rhythm of traditional music and then it was a meeting on the African philosophy 'Ubuntu', which focuses on people's allegiances and relations with each other. ISFIT participants took part in different workshops, which highlighted the festival theme in various ways. We were also welcomed to join a vast cultural programme of concerts, art exhibitions and performing arts."

WOMEN AND PEACE

She added, "I also got a chance to interact on a face-to-face basis with, Betty Williams, which I never expected. She shared her experiences about how she managed to make changes in Northern Ireland. I am also quite inspired by Shirin Ebadi's thoughts about empowerment of women. She explained to us what role women can play in the ongoing peace process in the Middle East."

MANY DIDN'T KNOW INDIA

Neha said, "I participated in a workshop called 'Children: Silent voices of the society'. Not all participants were aware about India and the condition of children here. A few of them had not even heard our country's name. The Oscar-winning film 'Slumdog Millionaire' had recently released at that time, and so Indian children and the situation over here became a part of the discussion."

Neha admits, "Before going to Norway, I was not expecting anything special, as I wanted to go there with open mind. The trip exposed me to different cultures, aspirations of participants to become world leaders and at least make small efforts towards bringing peace on this planet."

"Representing India on a global platform, meeting 400 students from 120 countries, talking to Nobel laureates, walking in the realms of snow-clad roads, skiing, and most importantly the learning experience of discussing and implementing the need of today's world; peace. This is what ISFIT 2009 was all about. One of the best endeavours of my life! I got a travel scholarship for the Norwegian festival!"

GETTING THE OTHER SIDE OF MEDIA STORIES

She added, "We participated in various workshops during the festival. During group discussions, I realised that not all students were aware about India and the situation over here. We were able to get the exact sense of the situation in conflict-prone countries such as Israel, Palestine and others. After interacting with students from these countries, I explored the other side of the stories which we get from the media. It helped broaden our horizons."

"Getting the other side of media stories is another important part of ISFIT. We participated in a seminar about migrants and expressed my views about migration problems."