IUPAP 3rd International Conference on Women in Physics (ICWIP2008), Korea

PROF. Shamima K Choudhury of the Department of Physics, University of Dhaka participated in the IUPAP 3rd International Conference on Women in Physics (ICWIP2008) in Seoul, Korea. She was one of over 330 scientists from nearly 70 countries from all corners of the world, who registered for the Third International Conference on Women in Physics (ICWIP2008). Delegates came from African, Asian, European, Latin American, North American, and island nations.



The meeting, held from 7 to 10 October was dedicated to celebrating the achievements in physics of women throughout the world, networking toward new international collaborations, gaining skills for career success, and aiding the formation of active regional working groups to advance women in physics. Each country presented information about its statistics and its activities to increase women's participation. Prof. Shamima Choudhury was invited to participate as team leader. She presented country paper on science education and status of women in science in Bangladesh. Prof. Nasima Ferdous of the same Department attended the conference as a team member.

The conference gave an opportunity to network with potential colleagues and to collaborate with experts from other countries to solve problems that can help society in specific way. It was exciting to learn from all the countries at the conference, and to see so many bright young physicists both women and men who are passionate about their research and committed to attracting girls to physics and advancing women.

Worldwide fewer than 15% of physicists are women. More than 80% of the conference attendees were women. It was clear that the scarcity of women in physics, especially in leadership positions, is a problem for many countries. These countries cannot benefit fully from women's ideas and approaches to improve the economic competitiveness or solve difficult problems, such as energy, health, and global sustainability.

Women, men, institutions, and governments need to work together to encourage, educate, recruit, retain, advance, and promote more girls and women in physics and other science and technology professions. To that end, the conference participants unanimously approved a resolution presented at the 26th General Assembly International Union of Pure and Applied Physics(IUPAP) in Tsukuba Japan on 15 October 2008.

The First International Conference on Women in Physics (ICWIP) was held in Paris in 2002. The Second conference was hosted by Rio de Janeiro in 2005. Since the first conference most countries have made some progress in attracting girls to physics, increasing the proportion of physics degrees to women, and promoting women physicists. However, the proportion of physicists who are women is well below 20% in nearly all countries too few to have maximum benefit for society.

Good bye to digital divide

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Besides, Ankur, a leading platform for the activists of Open Source Movement deals with the localisation of Linux, Open Office, Gaim etc. BdOSN (Bangladesh Open Source Network) is also contributing much to the Open Source Movement. So, at the state level if the government initiates e-governance project using the OSS philosophy, then presumably it would get volunteer supports from the OSS activists. This, in turn, will save huge amounts of government revenues.

Conclusive Remarks: Right decision in right time is the basic mantra for a nation's development. For overall development of the country, Bangladesh must concentrate on the rapid advancement of the ICT sector. Considering present financial constraints and linguistic barrier, right now the policy-makers of the country should think about incorporating Open Source Software at all levels. Especially, at the state level, the government should introduce a proper policy for the OSS and adopt projects on e-governance, emphasising the use of Open Source Software.

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