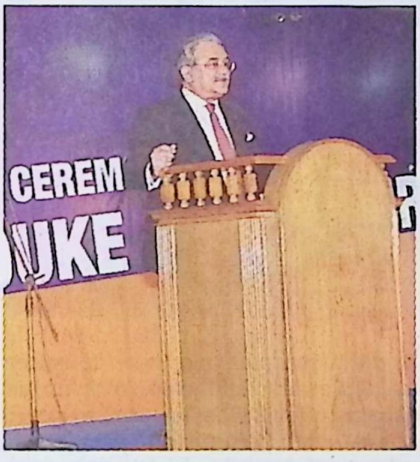
Duke of Edinburgh's Award in Bangladesh

Sayed Mohammed Abdul Karim

IT was the moment of inspiration, new hope and happiness. On the 31st May 2009, 265 Bronze Awardees gathered in the Carnival Hall of Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Center to join the First Award Ceremony of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

The programme started at 7 pm with the National Anthem followed by the welcoming speech of Suman Kumar Saha, National Director of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Foundation, Bangladesh. Professor Alauddin Ahmed, Advisor for Education, Social Development and Political Affairs to the Prime Minister graced the programme as the Chief Guest while Osman Morad, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of DoEAF in Bangladesh was present among them as the special guest.





Emphasising the need for holistic development of youth, Professor Alauddin Ahmed said, "For Bangladesh, this type of self-development program is an absolutely novel concept. Young people are the driving force of our country and this award will train them to make the society a better place to live in. I hope the transformation of the award participants will groom them as the competent human resources dedicated to take the country ahead".

Osman Morad in his speech emphasised on the importance of developing practical skills, creativity, respect, sympathy and understanding for the young people in order to compete in the global field. He said, "A well rounded education involves wide-ranging extra-curricular activities that prepare the young people to accomplish major achievements in their lives. I believe programmes like the Duke of Edinburgh's Award give them the perfect platform to flourish as a leader and be a worthy citizen of the country."

Vice Chancellors from different public and private universities, principals, teachers and award leaders from 11 different participating institutions were also present at the ceremony. The programme included chorus and dance performance by the awardees. Two underprivileged children educated by some of the awardees also performed at the ceremony. The programme ended with the concluding speech by the National Director of DEA in Bangladesh.

Since its inception in 1956 in England by HRH the Duke of Edinburgh, this award has been enjoying the reputation of being the world's most prestigious award for non-academic achievements by the young people of all backgrounds. It has been introduced in more than 120 countries involving more than 6 million people. Bangladesh adopted its slogan *"challenging young people everywhere"* and joined in the path of glory in August 2008.

The purpose of this award is to motivate the young people of under 25 years of age to carry out a variety of voluntary and challenging activities through which they attain self-development and make connection with the broader society by coming out of the cocoons with the help of various skills that they achieve within this programme.

This year the programme has been expanded to Chittagong. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Foundation Bangladesh has a plan to extend the programme through out the country involving more and more young people who can take the future challenge of leadership. The programme foresees to cover all divisional cities by two years and all district towns by 2015.