



Participants of the 1st Biochemistry Olympiad pose for photograph with the guests at the inaugural ceremony on the Dhaka University campus yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Turkish Hope, Sunbeams win Biochemistry Olympiad

DU CORRESPONDENT

International Turkish Hope School and Sunbeams took home the awards for the best school and the best college of the first Biochemistry Olympiad held on Dhaka University (DU) campus yesterday.

A total of 230 students from the capital's 30 schools and colleges participated in the olympiad on Curzon Hall premises.

The Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, DU organised the olympiad.

In the HSC / A Level category, Shiyed Hossain Ehsan of HURDCO International School became champion with 92 points on 100 while Sayed Hafizul Gafur of Oxford International School and Shabab Shahriar Khan of Mastermind English Medium School became first runners up jointly. Safwanul Haque of Scholastica was second runner up in the category.

In the SSC / O Level category, Labiba Mustabina of HURDCO International School became champion with 87 points on 100 while Subrina Fahreen Eusa of International Turkish Hope School and Shahruk Hossain of Bangladesh International School became first and second runners up respectively.

The organisers said that the main objective of the function was to encourage students to study biochemistry in future and conduct researches in the field.

Prof MA Bashar, dean of the faculty of

Biological Sciences at DU, inaugurated the programme lighting the Olympiad Torch.

Following the hour-long test, the participants visited the department's laboratories and other sections.

A poster and video presentation on biochemistry and molecular biology was also presented before the participants.

Speaking at the inaugural session, department Chairman Prof Mamun Rashid Chowdhury said this biochemistry olympiad is the first of its kind in the world.

In the afternoon, participants took part in a question-answer session where experts gave answers to their queries.

"Attending the programme, I have realised that biochemistry is an interesting subject. I will do my higher studies in biochemistry," said Sharna, a participant of Holly Cross School and College.

Saiful Haque of Dhaka College hoped that students from across the country would be involved in the competition next year.

"The main objective of the competition should not be finding out the best rather inspiring them to study the subject in the future," he added.

DU Vice-Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique and other guests distributed prizes among the winners in the concluding session.

North South University Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof SAM Khairul Bashar Syed and Executive Director of BRAC Dr Mahbub Hossain also spoke at the concluding session.

## Drug Admin upgraded with more decision-making power

222 more posts to be created initially

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

The Directorate of Drug Administration (DA) has finally been upgraded to Directorate General of DA with greater decision-making power and accountability.

It will start recruitment of requisite manpower soon after receiving the government order and will start functioning in full swing within two or three months, DA sources said.

The proposal for upgrading the DA was sent to the establishment ministry four years ago and it reached the Prime Minister's Office on December 26 last year. The PM's Office approved it on Tuesday.

As the Directorate of Drug Administration had no decision-making power, it had been suffering from lack of manpower and infrastructure but could not take any steps to resolve the problems. As a result, the

DA could not properly monitor the drug sector.

Even the two ailing drug-testing laboratories in Dhaka and Chittagong could not be upgraded for this reason. On the other hand, the country's drug market has expanded fast in the last few years.

There are only 24 offices of the DA across the country, sources said.

The DA authorities told The Daily Star that only 159 people have been working currently while the number of sanctioned posts is 220. As there is no superintendent in many districts, the authorities often find it difficult to conduct drives against spurious and smuggled drugs.

In the proposal, the DA authorities said that 222 more sanctioned posts will be created initially and some 1000 people will be recruited within a year for smooth functioning of the Directorate General.

"As per the World Health Organisation's recommendations, at least 10000 people is needed to monitor the drug market worth Tk 5,000 crore," said DA Director Ismail Hossain.

From now, manpower recruitment will be easier and the Directorate General will have more accountability as a division of labour will be set up, he added.

Ismail Hossain also said recruitment of more manpower will help strengthen the monitoring system and it will be easier to stop supply of spurious and contraband drugs.

"We will also take steps to establish a world class laboratory soon to ensure quality of drugs," he added.

Bangladesh is doing well in the pharmaceutical sector and it has been exporting drugs to 65 countries. The drug market in the country is now expanding day by day while the

annual income from drug export is more than Tk 400 crore.

Since 1984, the DA's workload has increased at least 20 times and the industry grew much larger. But due to lack of manpower and corruption in the administration, it failed to gain confidence of the people.

Talking to The Daily Star, Prof AK Azad of the department of Clinical Pharmacy and Pharmacology of Dhaka University welcomed the government's initiative to upgrade the DA, which has remained neglected for a long time.

"With the existing manpower and infrastructure, it is very difficult to monitor the huge market and ensure the quality of drugs. The government initiative to upgrade the DA is quite good, but only infrastructure could not do much. It is also important to give it a quasi-judicial status so that it can take immediate action," he said.

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