

Celebrating Brilliance

The Daily Star O & A Level Award Ceremony

MAHEJABEEN HOSSAIN NIDHI

On March 28, The Daily Star hosted its annual award ceremony for O and A Level students with the inspiring tagline "16 years of saluting the nation builders of tomorrow" at the Shaheed Suhrawardy National Indoor Stadium in Dhaka. A staggering 1760 students from both Edexcel and Cambridge curriculums qualified for this year's ceremony – O Level awardees having a minimum of 6 A's and A Level awardees attaining a minimum of 3 A's.

The ceremony commenced with a speech by Mahfuz Anam, Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star. In his speech he recognised that the aspiring youth present at the event are among the best and the brightest in the nation and that they "form the core of strength and change that shape Bangladesh." Furthermore, he acknowledged and deeply appreciated the roles of parents and teachers and pointed out values they must strive to maintain such as tolerance, democracy and curiosity. On an ending note, he urged the awardees to push Bangladesh forward and talked of its significance by saying, "Do not underestimate the value of serving your country."

Following Anam's inspiring speech, the British High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Robert Winnington Gibson



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

emphasised similar values and added, "There is no substitute for education." Afterward, the Chief Guest of the event, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid, came to the stage to express his faith in the students, saying, "You are not just the future leaders of Bangladesh, but the leaders of the world."

After the stirring speeches, Shah Habibur Rahman, a student of Manarat International School and College, was

invited on the stage as he had attained the highest number of A's in A Level in the country (5 A*'s and 1 A). Then, Mahin AR Rahman of Mastermind, who received the award for achieving 11 A*'s in O Level, got on stage and heartily thanked all those who helped him get to that point.

Oxford International School shook the stage with a dramatic dance performance. Subsequently, the awards for World and Country Highest were distributed. One

hundred and eighty students were specially recognised – 52 for achieving the highest scores in the world in different subjects and 128 for outperforming the rest in Bangladesh. Syed Mahbubur Rahman, Managing Director and CEO of BRAC Bank Limited, said that the achievers have made the country proud. Regional director of Pearson Edexcel Asia, Simon Young, congratulated "Bangladesh's students who competed on a world stage with success." After that, Professor Sadequr Rahman, School of Science, Monash University Malaysia; Professor M Omar Rahman, Vice-Chancellor of Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB); and Sandeep Gupta, General Manager of Microsoft Mobile Devices and Services, also spoke and motivated the students there.

All the awardees were then called to stage to collect their certificates and medals after two more dance performances by Shaheen School and Bangladesh International Tutorial. Shakib Al Hasan, who recently returned from the ICC Cricket World Cup, gave the closing speech, saying, "If you persist with hard work and faith, you can succeed in anything!"

Celebration partners of the event were BRAC Bank and Monash University Malaysia. Associate Partners were Edexcel, IUB and Microsoft.

What They Had to Say

TALKING TO THE AWARDEES

ADIT HASAN

We asked a few of the award recipients what the award meant to them and their plans for the future.

PHOTOS: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Fahmida Islam, Siddiqui's International School (O Levels)

Grades: 8A*'s, 1A

Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard – something I learned throughout this journey. The feeling of receiving this award is incredible but what is more incredible is to see my parents happy and knowing that I am the reason behind the smiles. And looking to the future I hope to see myself as a successful doctor and serving my country. Allah has blessed me with all this success and it would be my duty to help create a better world in the future.



Azman Anju Khan Chowdhury, St. Peter's School of London (O Levels)

Grades: 8A*'s, 2A's

I feel fortunate to achieve such outstanding results and am honoured to receive The Daily Star Award. I think it is a great initiative. I am grateful to The Almighty for blessing me with such amazing mentors. The grades I received in O Levels had more to do with their perseverance than mine. Whatever I am is the consequence of the relentless efforts of my parents, sisters and teachers. I believe studying all day doesn't bring fruit, rather managing time does. Honestly speaking, there is no alternative to hard work. In the future, I dream of becoming an entrepreneur and changing peoples' lives.



Hanin Basith Afzal, Sir John Wilson School (O Levels)

Grades: 6A*'s, 2A's

The Daily Star Award is, in my opinion, the biggest award that a student in Bangladesh could get. The whole time during the build-up to my O Levels I set that as a target. And getting this award feels like the culmination of all my hard work. No matter what I might do in the future I've promised myself that it would be something that I would thoroughly enjoy doing. And I must be able to do it with a clear conscience. It must be something that I know would have a positive output for the world and the people around me.



Lubaba Aria Zaman, Manarat Dhaka International College (A Levels)

Grades: 3A*'s, 1 A

This ceremony has allowed me to enjoy myself and take lots of photos on stage. We are a minority compared to the National candidates so we don't get a lot of encouragement. The Daily Star Award is the only place where I realise that my results are worth something, so I'm very grateful for that. I wanted to be a makeup artist but am studying Pharmacy now. Maybe I'll do both. Nothing is set in stone, but I'll work hard no matter what I do In Sha Allah.



Farhana Tabassum Fariha, Oxford International School (A levels)

Grades: 4A*'s

The Daily Star Award ceremony provided a platform to present, as well as honour, my talent and hard work in front of the whole country. The long and challenging path to shine amidst innumerable others requires a lot of patience, diligence and hard work. The Daily Star Award undoubtedly boosted my inspiration and resolution to do so.

