



HSBC – The Daily Star Junior Climate Champions 2014 Encouraging Environmental Activism

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"We are moving away from nature. If this continues, then our civilisation, history and our existence will be at stake," said Cultural Affairs Minister Asaduzzaman Noor at the award-giving ceremony of Junior Climate Champions 2014 held at Bangla Academy.

Junior Climate Champions (JCC) 2014, a collaboration of HSBC and The Daily Star, is an initiative taken to raise awareness among the high school students of Bangladesh on adverse climatic changes. This venture aims to highlight the importance of preserving our environment for future generations. Waste Concern is the knowledge partner of the project.

The second season of JCC was held in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions. Since its inception, JCC has garnered recognition, receiving a staggering response from high schools nationwide – the Aga Khan School, Scholastica, Viqarunnisa Noon School and College, Govt. Agragami Girls' High School, Anandaniketan School, Ispahani Public School and College and many more. The immediate participation among the student forums was astonishing – over 7200 students from three divisions. Two hundred and twenty-three winners from the divisional rounds were selected to participate in the national finale which was held at Bangla Academy on May 23. The competition comprised of four different categories – extempore speeches, quiz, environment-related projects, and posters and painting competition. At the national finale, 33 winners were awarded in the four categories. The winners received crests, medals, certificates and free subscriptions of The Daily Star newspaper for six months.

Although Bangladesh's drastic climate change has been a hot topic of discussion for years now, few initiatives have been taken to raise awareness by integrating the creative endeavours of the nation's youth. This platform has provided an opportunity for high school students to showcase their intellectual capabilities while simultaneously bringing into focus an important environmental concern. "This is a great opportunity for us to



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learn about the effects of our actions on our surroundings. Participating in this competition has changed my perspective on environmental sustainability. It's made me want to do more to protect and preserve our environment," said Khadiza Binte Ahsan, a participant from the Aga Khan School, Dhaka.

"You need to understand that saving the environment is saving yourself," said Mahfuz Anam, Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star, adding that awareness can only be spread by promoting science-based knowledge amongst the youth.

The central theme declared for the competition was "Climate change in Bangladesh." Participants in the various contests were required to incorporate this theme

into their projects. Contestants of extempore speech had to prepare a three-minute speech and present it in front of a panel of judges. Others brought along inventive albeit cumbersome models of various environment-related projects. "I'm very excited to be a part of an initiative such as this. Bangladesh is facing severe threats in the form of climate change due to global warming. In order to reverse that, we need to be aware of the causes. Preparation for this competition has made me aware," said Mumtahina Tasnim Purno, a student from Govt. Agragami Girls' High School and College, Sylhet.

First-prize winners of the poster/painting competition included Somapty Sikder from Chittagong Grammar School and Shoumik Roy from Chittagong Govt. High School. Tahnyia Rahman from Anandaniketan and Aaimam Haque from Heed International School were the winners of the environment-project contest. Sakib Ahmed, a class-IX student of Anandaniketan, received the first prize in both quiz and speech categories in the senior age group. He also won the third prize in the project category with his model of 'green irrigation by a wind power scheme.'

Sakib said, "I want to be an engineer someday because I think engineering and environment preservation go hand in hand. Think of a car that runs purely on bio fuel, not toxic gases which ultimately harm the atmosphere. Climate change can only be combated through scientific learning." Sakib's enthusiasm portrays the growing need for student involvement in reversing the adverse climate changes.

A total of 33 students received awards in two age groups – Junior (Class VI-VIII) and Senior (Class IX-X). Among the participants, the students of Anandaniketan School from Sylhet received the highest number of prizes. Manoj Kumar Biswas, General Manager of the Green Banking and CSR department of Bangladesh Bank, attended the event as a special guest. Francois de Maricourt, CEO of HSBC-Bangladesh, and AHM Maksud Sinha, Executive Director of the Waste Concern, were also present on behalf of their respective organisations.



PHOTOS: DARSHAN CHAKMA