



# ENHANCING BANGLA SKILLS OF ENGLISH MEDIUM STUDENTS

## 6th Bangla Olympiad at International Turkish Hope School

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In the month of commemorating the Language Movement, International Turkish Hope School (ITHS) organised 6th Bangla Olympiad on February 11. The Olympiad hosted over 1800 students of more than 60 schools (including multiple branches of most of the schools) from around the country.

Bangla Olympiad had six categories of competition – poem recitation, drawing, essay writing, music, dance and forum. Each category was judged by leading personalities in those respective fields. Of the 36 distinguished judges, there were many household names such as renowned actor Chanchal Chowdhury, actress and TV presenter Sharmin Nahar Lucky and singer Kumar Bishwajit, among others.

This event inspired almost 2,000 students – national and international – to actively immerse themselves in Bangladesh's culture and mother language. Selima Samad, Head of Department, Pre K, ITHS, has been involved with the Bangla Olympiad since its inception. "We have been arranging this event for the past few years and with each passing year, we have been trying to expand its horizons. Through this event, I believe that we are upholding and propagating the Bengali culture and heritage among students. I hope that this will continue in the coming years with even more success," she said.

The Olympiad has evolved to be more engaging, and provides participants with more options to express themselves and showcase their skills. For the first time, the category "forum" was introduced to allow competitors to express their ideas on a given topic in Bangla. Anjam Masud, a judge at forum, said, "These days, for a lot of

students, English is the prime language of education and communication; therefore, there's a lack of grooming in Bangla communication. With efforts such as this, the students will be encouraged to improve."

One of the most heart-warming aspects of the Olympiad was finding foreign nationals, who despite their

understand the lyrics."

Among the participants of the art competition was a South Korean student, Seong Min Kim. "I am drawing this scene depicting the Bangla New Year, after going through several Bangladeshi festivals. I feel like it was a great study for me. I am honoured to be here," said Seong.

through the night-long rehearsals. The facilities are great and the organisers took good care of us. Everything has been brilliantly organised."

ITHS has always been dedicated to enriching cultural atmosphere. Bangla Olympiad is inspired by the International Festival of Language and Culture, where in the last 13 years a significant number of Bangladeshi English medium school students have participated in. These International Festival programmes have been hosted at many countries, including Australia, Philippines and Turkey. These events and participants are being sponsored by ITHS. Thus, ITHS became motivated to organise an event dedicated solely to Bangla.

Professor Mohammad A. Arafat, part of the advisory panel, said, "I am honoured to be connected to this event. It's truly a revolutionary act, especially on this scale. There is an immense need to preserve culture and language and that's what is being done here."

Professor Dr. Syed Manzoorul Islam, Professor Dr. Abu Yousuf Md. Abdullah, Professor Dr. Ziaur Rahman, Professor Dr. Sadeka Halim, magician and musician Jewel Aich, and poet Farid Kabir are special advisors to the Bangla Olympiad.

The Chairman of Bangla Olympiad Executive Committee, Shahriar Bin Mukhles, stated that the event grows in an unprecedented fashion and he would like to see the Bangla Olympiad as an independent entity that will represent the Bangladeshi culture at international platforms. The Event Director, Kamol Chowdhury, thanked all the judges and advisors for their participation and also added that the event was a great success with their contribution.

The Daily Star was the youth engagement partner of the event.



limited ability with the Bangla language were very eager to embrace the Bangladeshi culture and express their thoughts through songs and art. Turkish national Mehlika Sultan Ovenc, a second grader, after singing on stage said, "I was born here. When I try something in Bangla, I feel ecstatic. I chose to sing this song because I

Shamina Huda Chumki, junior head at Bangladesh Elementary School, Chittagong, was one of the coordinators who came from outside Dhaka to take part in the programme. She said, "It was a challenging experience bringing 24 students from grades 3 to 10 from outside the city. However, we are enjoying the experience. We powered