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# The generation that cares about the climate

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When 16-year old Greta Thunberg decided to take her concerns about the degrading climate outside the Swedish parliament back in August of last year, no one could have predicted how great of an impact it would end up having on the young generation. Her actions got noticed, and soon, it took the form of a movement. A year later, and we find ourselves amidst the biggest climate protest this world has ever seen — the global climate strike.

Organised by Greta and many other like-minded climate activists, the most recent global climate strike was observed in more than a hundred countries. Millions of people all over the world left their day-to-day priorities and headed out on the streets to take part in the movement, which began on September 20 and is scheduled to come to a close on the 27th; Bangladesh was no different to this.

In solidarity with the climate strike, thousands of children from different schools and colleges, and other youth-led organisations took part in a demonstration on the roads of Manik Mia Avenue. The event, jointly organised by Save the Children in Bangladesh and Green Savers Association, saw the participation of about 3000 people.

The participants at the demonstration formed a human-chain to show their support for the worldwide movement. They also brought out a procession with placards and banners with the slogan "Our world, our future. Plant trees and save the world." Following all this, there was a discussion on the growing issue of climate change and its impact here in Bangladesh.

The global climate strike was organised ahead of the UN Climate Action Summit held on September 23. This was done to ensure that leaders of the world took notice of the threats posed by climate change and then, work out concrete plans at the summit to tackle the problems. Activists have also urged the leaders to take decisive steps to reduce extraction and consumption of fossil fuels, and to look towards renewable energy as an alternative.

Climate change is one of the biggest issues our era has ever faced, and if left as it is, it will go on to create a chain of catastrophic situations and disasters, which will probably wipe out the existence of the human race. Being ignorant to all this will only cause problems for our future generation. Thankfully, these young kids are cautious about the consequences they might have to face and are playing their part to prevent them. Our responsibility is to stand by them, and do our part to make sure that a world still exists for the leaders of tomorrow.

# CLIMATE CRISIS AND ITS YOUTH ICONS

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Eight-year old Esme Ruiz attending the climate strike outside the UN Headquarters in New York told the press, "The world is literally melting right in front of our eyes and no one even realises it. We need to teach them. It's hard to make changes sometimes, but if you need to save the world, I'd do it rather than die."

On August 30, 2019, children and youth sat outside the UN Headquarters as part of the ongoing climate protest where they were joined by Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg. At just 16 years old, Greta started a major global protest against climate change inaction and held political leaders accountable for their lack of commitment to fight climate change.

Her heroic two-week journey across the Atlantic Ocean on a solar-powered zero emissions sailboat to reach USA inspired many to make the environmentally conscious decisions to not fly and opt for other modes of transport. "The Greta Effect" swept across Europe where many people now say they feel 'guilty' for flying and in Sweden a new word 'flygskam' describes feeling shame about flying.

In a Facebook post dated September 19, Barack Obama wrote, "At just 16 years old, Greta Thunberg is already one of our planet's greatest advocates. Her age might have something to do with it. With full knowledge that her generation will bear the heaviest burden of climate change, she's unafraid to believe that progress is possible—and fight for real change."

And it is real change she is after. During August 30's sit down protest, Greta, along with notable 14-year old activist Alexandria Villaseñor and 17-year old activist Xiye Bastida Patrick were invited inside the UN and sat down in an impromptu meeting with UN General Assembly President María Fernanda Espinosa. In this meeting the youth activists raised many issues that have citizens globally concerned including the Amazon fire and forest fires around

the world, single use plastics, and the upcoming UN Climate Action Summit 2019 in which Greta herself is slated to speak.

As global temperatures continue to rise and every July sets the record for the hottest month in recorded history, across the world the Amazon and places in Bolivia, Indonesia, Canary Islands, Siberia, Greenland and sub-Saharan Africa continue to burn. Although Indonesia boasts some of the world's oldest and most biodiverse forests, more and more land is being burned to clear the way for the palm oil trade by farmers and corporations. Greenpeace said in a statement, "Siberia, one of the coldest places on Earth, is on fire. The Amazon, one of the wettest places on Earth, is on fire. Fires are burning across the planet, we need to act fast."

With one million species currently at risk of extinction, these desperate times have given rise to youth climate activism around the world particularly with the Fridays for Future movement where children and teenagers demand climate action for themselves. Greta Thunberg summed up the youth's sentiments when she said, "Some people say that we are not doing enough to fight climate change. But that is not true. Because to 'not do enough' you have to do something. And the truth is we are basically not doing anything."

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