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## The Earth Society successfully organises CLIMATE EXPO 2023

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SUMAIYA RASHID

The Earth Society, in partnership with the Climate Parliament of Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Movers Program, RR Kabel Bangladesh, and UNDP conducted Climate Expo 2023 at Gulshan Society Park on February 25, 2023, with the goal of showcasing, connecting, and collaborating on sustainable goods, services, innovation, and eco-friendly activities in order to contribute to SDG-13.

The goal of Climate EXPO 2023 was to connect climate entrepreneurs and change-makers with diverse stakeholders such as corporations, incubators, investors, policymakers, and public visitors. There were small workshops, panel discussions, exhibitor stalls, and interactive activities for leading new solutions to raise awareness on the topic.

"The purpose of today is to promote sustainable living, whether via work or on a personal level. We wanted to provide exposure to what we do and how we promote sustainable living in Bangladesh," said Mashiat Fariha Alam, Senior Project Manager at SOLshare.

SOLShare, Palki Motors Limited, Antobihin, Wastech, Aicha, Safepad Bangladesh, Dr. Chashi, and several other eco-friendly startups were among the green projects showcased at

the Expo.

Jabir Al Mahdi, Co-founder, Wastech describes his experience, "We've wanted to participate in an expo like this for a long time but haven't had the chance until now. We make handcrafted items out of scrap plastic. Our flagship product, the eco-pen made from recycled and discarded papers, will launch next month. We were able to network with many delegates and significant personnel here, and we received feedback from them, which I feel is our most essential takeaway from this Expo. We didn't expect to get so much exposure today, so we're highly satisfied with the outcome."

The final panel discussion led on the agenda "Green Partnership - Collaboration for sustainable solution" and the panellists included, Shamima Akhter, Head of Corporate Affairs, Partnership, and Communication, Unilever; Farhana Islam, Head of Social Impact, Gramcephone; Robert Chatterton Dickson, British High Commissioner to Bangladesh; Keith Metzner, team leader, Climate and Environment, USAID Bangladesh; Sarder M. Asaduzzaman, Assitant Resident Representative and Head of Programme Management and Partnership, UNDP

Bangladesh; Dr Saiful Momen, Assistant Professor & Chair of the Department of Environmental Science and Management, North South University.

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, MP, Chairman, Standing Committee on Ministry of Forest, Environment and Climate Change Chief Patron, Climate Parliament Bangladesh chaired the panel session and concluded the expo by sharing his viewpoint, "If I can make a confession, I had no idea that so much work was actually being done at the grassroots level by young people. But that is inspiring also because we always think of climate and environment as challenges, at liabilities, but I think there are also opportunities. The young generation in particular are trying to catch up on and that is very exciting. It's a great initiative, I commend and salute the work you're doing. You talked about the SDGs and SDG 17 is about partnerships and I think as we look forward, we need to look at how do we bring governments, how do we bring the academia, the corporate sector, the entrepreneurs and even perhaps development partners together. And I think that's really one puzzle that we need to solve first and I'm sure we are all on the same page."

## How I learned to not hate dorms

SADMAN AHMED

I remember when my roommate started to cough frantically at 2:30 AM one day. He had a severe cold for a few days, and that night it got worse. I got up from my bed to fetch the medicine. It didn't feel like a big deal at the time, but the realisation hit me later. What had I just done?

Had this happened just a while back, I'd have probably panicked and woken up someone older for help.

I have been in Dhaka for my whole life. My school and my college always had the same roads and I was always home before dark. As I listened to the stories of my parents' dorm lives, I never felt like those things could happen to me. But fate had reserved something else for me.

The period of denial occurs before one commits to the dorm life. "I have never lived outside home! How can I stay in a dorm?" - the thought haunted me. But practical necessities forced me to take up residence in a random room that was allotted for me. And since...

There has been a brief period of sadness. I had never imagined myself in a scenario like this, but here I was, sharing a room with three different strangers. I looked at the unrecognisable ceilings, talking only when needed. It didn't take long to go from there to a place where my internal voice screamed, "I WANNA GO HOME!"

After the initial phase of denial, I slowly



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

realised that we were living, studying, sharing notes, borrowing each other's tools, and helping each other out every day without realising it consciously. The people living in the hall became the most familiar faces. It did feel like home. That night, my roommate felt like family.

Is family really the word for it? Leaving our loved ones elsewhere, dorms do create a new family for everyone, where you live with each other and become more than friends. Not that there aren't any struggles. Just like a real family, a dorm family involves people from different backgrounds, beliefs, and habits. Nights without classes the next day can result in a night-long storytelling epic, sharing one's most embarrassing or emotional memories.

Romanticising my hall life doesn't mean I want to shy away from the fact that in many universities the dorm life is not so rosy, due to issues as ragging and student politics. But these experiences have given me the privilege to create a new family in a safe place and for that, I'm extremely grateful.

*Sadman, as the name suggests is indeed a sad man. He got sorted in Hufflepuff at pottermore and has been sad ever since. Send him happy quotes at siamahmed09944@gmail.com*

## Transforming futures: The power of Uttoron's youth training and employment programme

SAUDIA AFRIN

"It wasn't easy to endure the mistreatment of society for being an unemployed youth," said 24-year-old Nahidul Islam, sharing the difficulty he faced in finding employment after completing his SSC.

He also completed a basic computer course, but the certificate did not prove helpful in securing a job due to its lack of validation.

However, Nahidul didn't lose hope.

He was able to improve his financial situation by completing advanced and basic welding trainings under the Swisscontact project Uttoron in partnership with Khulna Shipyard.

The high-quality training allowed him to discover new career opportunities, and with his enhanced skills, Nahidul now prefers to freelance for higher earnings instead of settling for a permanent job.

Currently, he works as a welder in the Gazi Pipe Factory, building steel shades.

**Uttoron - a promising initiative**

The skill development initiative Uttoron is a joint project between Swisscontact and Chevron, with financial support from the latter.

Chevron runs three gas fields in the northeast region of the country and has a goal of enhancing the lives and livelihoods of the local residents, particularly by empowering young people. Swisscontact, on the other hand, places a significant emphasis on skill development programmes such as upskilling, reskilling, and introductory vocational training, with youth advancement being one of its key objectives. The partnership between these two organisations on the Uttoron project was formed with the common aim of promoting youth skill development.

Nadia Afrin Shams, the Team Leader for Swisscontact's Uttoron Project, noted that annually, 6.6 million individuals enter the

workforce, both in formal and informal settings, but many lack fundamental training and skills, making it challenging for them to enter the industry. The aim of Uttoron is to enhance the technical skills of young people through vocational training, make training more accessible, and bring new ideas to the national skills sector.

The Uttoron project began in 2016 and its second phase, which lasted three years, was completed in 2022.

Under this project, basic training in eight different trades, such as welding, Packaging and Finishing Operation (PFO), electrical installation and maintenance, plumbing pipe fitting, mobile phone servicing, housekeeping, refrigeration and air conditioning, and machinist were provided. These three-month courses offered over 300 hours of learning and training opportunities, with locations in Dhaka, Sylhet, Habiganj, and Moulvibazar.

Dulal Krishna Saha, former head of the National Skills Development Authority, praised Uttoron for its innovative approach. He noted that many well-educated young people struggle to fully utilise their abilities because they lack hands-on experience. He stressed the importance of programmes like Uttoron that provide not only theoretical education but also practical apprenticeships for students to apply their knowledge.

**Facilitating advanced courses**

Nadia Afrin highlighted the issue of hiring welding workers from outside due to a shortage of formally skilled workers in Bangladesh. To address this, Uttoron and the Khulna Shipyard Technical Training Center, a leading government technical facility, joined forces to provide advanced welding training to 50 basic welding trainees using internationally standardised methods, she informed.

Swisscontact supported the training programme by providing trainers up-to-



date machinery and test equipment to set up a modern lab facility at the Khulna Shipyard Technical Training Center as well as a comprehensive curriculum for advanced welding training. The training was conducted by the Khulna Shipyard Technical Training Center.

According to Captain Abul Kalam Azad, General Manager of Khulna Shipyard, the students not only received training to improve their prospects, but also gained practical experience by building ships at the shipyard. This combination of theory and practical knowledge is crucial for success in technical and vocational education and training, as well as future recruitment.

The students were certified by Bureau Veritas (BV), a highly recognised global certification institute, giving them a better chance of being accepted by large companies. In addition, Uttoron established the

national standard for the welding inspector profession in partnership with the National Skills Development Authority (NSDA) and introduced an android app in Bangla to enhance the soft skills of unskilled and semi-skilled youth in the formal job market.

**Creating new job opportunities for women**  
Fahima Akhter, who was pursuing her honours degree in Political Science, started teaching at a local kindergarten school to support her family. However, she was struggling to make ends meet as her earnings were not sufficient.

To try her luck in the technical sector, Fahima participated in a three-month-long Packaging and Finishing Operation (PFO) trade program under project Uttoron. She quickly landed a job at PRAN RFL, Habiganj Industrial Park as an assistant operator, thanks to her strong grasp of both theory and

practice she acquired through the training. a

Fahima expressed her gratitude, saying, "With the earnings from this job, I am now able to support my family."

The female-friendly Packaging and Finishing Operation (PFO) training programme has provided a new opportunity for underprivileged women in remote areas of Bangladesh to participate in the economy through the packaging sector.

Along with PFO, women and men were trained in other trades. In 2022, a total of 1931 graduates of Uttoron completed vocational training programs, with 24 percent of them being women.

**Permanent training facility established**

To increase access to vocational training for young people of all backgrounds, Uttoron and the Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) joined forces in 2022 by establishing a permanent training facility. The goal of the collaboration is to create a training centre managed by SCC, providing convenient access to vocational training.

Ariful Haque Choudhury emphasised the high expatriate presence in the SCC demographics and stated, "To maintain economic growth in my region and fulfill labour demands with local resources, while also meeting external demands, we must focus on skill development. We need more public-private initiatives like Uttoron." The SCC is working to link the training institute with industry for hands-on learning experiences.

To build a skilled nation, it is crucial to adopt an integrated approach involving the government, private organisations, and NGOs to provide quality training. The Uttoron project provides a valuable model, combining training facilities, skill development opportunities, and public-private partnerships, which can be emulated to drive progress in Bangladesh.