

Global youth to build bridges



Students applaud at the closing ceremony of the American-Bangladeshi Youth Leadership Exchange Program at STM Hall of Scholastica in the city's Uttara yesterday. Photo: [The Daily Star](#), Thursday, January 12, 2012

Staff Correspondent

Building bridges and solidarity among young people from different nations could help address the global challenges like climate change, speakers said here yesterday.

"Students are the best bridges that are invaluable and tie the world together, especially when so many forces try to divide the world," said Dan Mozena, US ambassador to Bangladesh.

The remarks came at the closing ceremony of a month-long American-Bangladeshi Youth Leadership Exchange Programme at Scholastica School in the city's Uttara.

For the first time, 30 US high school students and five US educators took part in such an exchange programme with Scholastica students. They visited communities in Bangladesh to learn about climate change adaptation and mitigation. The students attended workshops and conducted small service projects.

World Savvy, a US-based non-profit organisation, arranged the event in partnership with Scholastica, and SPEED, a training centre in Dhaka, funded by the US Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and World Savvy.

Speaking as chief guest, Mozena said the US students were lucky enough that they could enjoy the hospitality and graciousness of the Bangladeshis.

UN Resident Coordinator Neal Walker said UN world faces real risks due to climate change, and some of the risks could be truly catastrophic.

He said melting of ice in the Himalayas and rise of sea levels put Bangladesh in the frontline of the challenges. Reducing carbon emission is a huge task, but it requires nations to come together, he noted.

"Your actions, as individuals and organisations, can have a lot of influence," he told the students, adding that despite different interests, various countries must come together and build consensus to tackle the global menace.

Lawmaker Saber Hossain Chowdhury said when climate change is a scientifically proven issue, there is yet skepticism about it in some people. "I think the US students can be our ambassadors on climate change in the US," he said.

Bangladesh is the champion in adaptation, but it cannot continue being so indefinitely. The UN has to play a crucial role in international governance, and bring all the nations together to reduce carbon emission, he noted.

Sharing his experience, Scholastica student Sharhan Munir said, "The biggest learning I would take away is solidarity. We will work together for humanity."

Scholastica Founding Chairperson Yasmeen Murshed and World Savvy Board of Directors Vice Chair Doug Tilden distributed certificates among the participants. Scholastica Managing Director Madiha Murshed and World Savvy Executive Director Dana Mortenson also spoke on the occasion.