

HSBC, Star honour climate heroes

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From left, **Hishamuddin B Saleh, managing director of Bengal Glass Works Ltd**, AKM Zakaria, joint director of Rural Development Academy in Bogra, Mosfiqua Haque, director of Radio Today, Tore Johnsen, CEO of Grameenphone, and Md Nurul Aktar, CEO of Energypac Electronics Ltd, pose with HSBC-The Daily Star Climate Awards at Radisson Hotel in the capital yesterday. Photo: STAR Staff Correspondent

Saving the environment is not a daunting task but failure to do so has bigger consequences for the future generations.

Local environment activists, organisers and speakers yesterday voiced their concern about the growing challenges of global climate change and local environment degradation.

Their observations came at a ceremony in the city's Radisson Hotel, where HSBC and The Daily Star jointly awarded one government and four private organisations for their efforts in making a difference in saving the country's environment.

In green business category of HSBC-The Daily Star Climate Awards 2011, Energypac Electronics Ltd won for their pioneering role in promoting, popularising and manufacturing energy efficient lights in Bangladesh.

Bengal Glass Works Ltd won the award in green operations category for their ground-breaking work in reducing energy consumption, heat/carbon emission, water and paper recycling, and waste management. In the same category, Grameenphone Ltd, the country's leading mobile phone operator, won the award, as a foreign entity, for converting 39 base transceiver stations (BTS) into renewable-energy-run ones. The company aims to convert 160 more transceivers by 2012.

Radio Today, a popular FM radio channel, won the award in the knowledge management category. Under the campaign Green Radio, it raised awareness among urban people, especially the youth, about keeping the environment clean, saving water, electricity and gas, and managing waste.

In the community engagement category, the award went to Rural Development Academy, Bogra, a government initiative under the LGRD ministry. The academy is engaged in poverty alleviation interventions through research in farming, horticulture, floriculture, tissue culture, pisciculture, livestock, poultry and water management.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid handed over the awards to the winners.

"We have to stop polluting the environment and the nature. It is our obligation to give a safer future to the next generations," Nahid told the ceremony.

He said many rivers have been lost and those that are still alive have toxic water. He said many are damaging the environment either intentionally to serve their interest or unintentionally.

"We have to be aware and take realistic steps to protect the environment, as we face serious danger."

He said steps have to be taken at individual, family, societal and national levels to create awareness. He said the school-going children have to be educated on this, otherwise the steps will not bear fruit.

The minister thanked HSBC and The Daily Star for introducing the award that can help protect the environment.

Sanjay Prakash, chief executive officer of HSBC, Bangladesh, said impact of climate change is long term. "It is the community that can make the difference..."

Prakash said, "The five climate awardees have shown us how adaptation can help them and the nation as well save the environment."

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said in many cases the damage that is being done to the environment is irreversible. In a sense, the climate cannot repair itself.

"But we have ways and materials to solve the problem. The whole world's knowledge is at the doorstep of Bangladesh," he said, urging all to do something at individual and institutional levels and use less water, polythene and produce less garbage.

ATM Nurul Amin, professor and dean of environment science and management, North South University, said nothing would be achieved if the government does not come forward. The issue requires collective effort.

Nurul Amin led the four-member jury board that picked the winners.

"We have to change our behaviour to save the environment," he said.

AH Md Maqsood Sinha, executive director of Waste Concern, said businesses have to care for the environment, apply commonsense and comply with rules to protect the environment.

Tore Johnsen, chief executive of Grameenphone, **Hishamuddin B Saleh, managing director of Bengal Glass Works Ltd**, Md Nurul Aktar, CEO of Energypac Electronics, AKM Zakaria, joint director of RDA, Bogra, Moshfiqua Haque, a director of Radio Today, received the awards on behalf of their organisations.

The award winners also vowed to speed up their efforts to protect the environment.

"We have been airing social awareness programmes since we launched the radio station. We are doing it every single day of the year," said Moshfiqua Haque, adding, "This award will encourage us to do more and do something bigger."

Tore Johnsen said Grameenphone is not focused on only solar energy to reduce energy consumption. "We have reduced our power consumption by 40 percent by changing equipment in our network."

"The new equipment does not require air-conditioners. We have taken air-conditioners out of 7,500 base stations. We will continue to do more to reduce energy consumption," he said.

AKM Zakaria dedicated the award to the country's rural women, who contribute to ensuring food security by preserving seeds.