Debate competition as a Tool for Zoo Education at Dhaka Zoo: For the first time

Dr. R. MD. Shakif-Ul-Azam

Debate is a formal method of presenting arguments in *support* and *against* a given issue (expressed in a form of a debate topic) in which *debaters* present reasons and evidence to persuade an audience or a group of judges.

Like the other Zoo's of the world, Zoo & Education center of Dhaka Zoo try to organizes various outreach programmes involving children, students, local peoples and visitors to create awareness towards wildlife conservation.. The main objectives of such outreach programmes help in sensitizing the students as well as the visitors towards environment, forest and wildlife conservation issues.

After the successful completion of the last program held on 10th December 2010 entitled "Banning polybags inside the zoo will help keep our wild animals safe". Dhaka Zoo for the first time organized a debate competition. The programme started with a rally from Curator's office. The Rally went round through out the Zoo with banner and announced the importance of healthy Nature, how it disturb, what its affects on wild animals & what initiative immedeatly needed to stop such distruction. The rally was presided over by Dr. A. B. M. Shahid Ullah, Curator, Dhaka Zoo. Zoo Officers, journalist and Intern students from Sylhet Agricultural University (SAU) and Hajje Danesh Science and Technology University (HSTU) worked together collaboratively for the programme.

For the debate competition Dhaka Zoo selected the following Topics: "Prakitik Biporjoy'e Bonnoprani Biluptir Akmattro Karon" (Natural disaster is solely responsible for the extinction of wild animals). As it was known that, choosing a good debate topic is one of the most important and yet also one of the most difficult tasks for debate organizers. A topic that will motive the audience to come to the debate. According to Public debate toolkit, for selecting and wording a debate topic following criteria are importance: a) It should provide enough disagreement or pose a problem with many potential solutions. B) It should provide enough arguments and evidence for both sides in debate- the affirmative and negative. Most of the participants in the debate competition emphasized on the fact that how, why and what process the environment for the animals are destroyed and what are the harmful affects for such destruction in future.

Bibekananda Choudhury, Chief Judge of the debate giving his final remarks

Chief guest distributing prizes to the debate team members

Participants of the Debate Competition

MD. Shakif-Ul-Azam. Dhaka Zoo, Bangladesh. Email: shakif78@gmail.com