FIJI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

FNU News

Minister for Education, Honourable Rosy Akbar (second row, middle) with student participants, teachers, volunteers and organising staff from FNU, University of Newscastle and the Ministry.

Science and Engineering Challenge ends on a high

Young science enthusiasts and the next generation of innovators from eight secondary schools in Suva were part of the successful culmination of the inaugural Science and Engineering Challenge (SEC) at the Vodafone Arena in Suva this afternoon.

The event, which was organised by Fiji National University (FNU) and the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the University of Newcastle, attracted more than 400 students from selected Primary and Secondary schools from the Central Division during the two-day event.

Suva Muslim College was declared the winner of the High School division, with Jai Narayan College coming up as first-runner up and Rampur College placed third.

Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts, Honourable Rosy Akbar was present to award the winning school with the champion trophy and acknowledge the remaining schools with a certificate of participation. "I'm glad you took time out of your classrooms to be part of this significant event we have organised to encourage you to take up science and engineering subjects," Honourable Akbar said.

"We intend to make this event an after-exam activity for all schools across the country."

Team Leader SEC at the University of Newcastle, Adriana Zaja said the two-day event was a success and hoped students would now consider science in their future studies.

"You have all the possibilities to choose what you love to do. Skills in Science, Engineering, Technology and Maths (STEM) will help you in whatever future and career you decided," Zaja said.

"We acknowledge our partners, who have made this event possible, the Fijian Ministry of Education, Fiji National University and the University of Newcastle."

"We thank the volunteers who ran the activities for both the primary and secondary school students. Thank you to all the teachers as well for bringing their students out to this event."

Jai Narayan College Year 9 student, Rohan Prasad was part of the Flat Pack challenge activity alongside schoolmate Aayush Singh.

"Today was enjoyable and challenging. We had to design and build a model of a chair and table cost-effectively," Prasad said.

"It tested our teamwork and planning because the materials we used were priced, so we had to plan which materials to buy to minimise our costs."

Suva Muslim College - Winners of the 2019 Science and Engineering Challenge High School Division.

Gospel High School Year 9 duo Pranisha Prasad and Susana Pita had to construct a tall earthquake-proof tower as part of the Helter Skelter Shelter activity. Students were required to use only basic materials, sound engineering principals and ingenuity.

"We're glad we came today to participate in this challenge," Prasad said.

"It was just Susana and I in our team while the other schools had about three to four people in their team, but this didn't stop us from building our tower."

Pita said they had expected to use wooden materials to build their tower but were surprised when they were told to use straws and paper. "This tested our thinking because we had to see how we could use these items in a way that would stabilise the tower."

"Our towers had to be tested at the end, and we were lucky that our tower survived the earthquake simulator test. This gave us high points in the activity."

Other science and engineering challenge activity stations included a rail network system, communicating using light transmitted through an optical fibre, building a 'bionic' hand, controlling the supply and demand of power, constructing Styrofoam planes and building a small bridge made of pins, tape and popsicle sticks.

Pranisha Prasad and Susana Pita of Gospel High School building their earthquake-proof tower at the Science and Engineering Challenge.

The items were tested at the end of each activity for its durability, efficiency, effectiveness and cost-efficiency. Students were awarded points accordingly.

FNU Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning and Teaching, Professor James Pounder highlighted that the Science and Engineering Challenge provided an insight into how exciting engineering and science could be.

"The Challenge consists of several short projects carried out by teams of students, and the degree of enthusiasm generated in the teams was very high," Professor Pounder said.

"Disciplines such as engineering and science should not be thought of in purely a traditional way, but should be seen as involved in all sorts of areas such as computing, biomedicine and even creating movie special effects."

"FNU is always looking to develop new programmes in engineering and science and wherever possible, adopt the type of project-based learning approach that was evidenced in the Science and Engineering Challenge."

Students from Suva Muslim College, Marist Brothers High School, Saint Joseph Secondary School, Suva Sangam College and Vashist Muni College and Rampur College from Navua were also part of the event.

Eight schools were part of the Primary School division challenge yesterday.

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