

# Radio Singapore International - Singapore Scene

## National Weather Study Project 2007

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Senoko Power Limited, the largest power generation company in Singapore recently announced the launch of the National Weather Study Project 2007. This year's competition involves a total of 240 Singapore schools, two-thirds of the school population in Singapore. This is a thirty-five percent increase from last year's.



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Stay tuned to the Singapore Scene as we find out why this national level competition has attracted so much support and enthusiasm in such a short time.

Welcome to the program, I'm Mubin Sa'adat.

The competition, in its second year is aimed at promoting awareness amongst students of how weather patterns impact upon our everyday lives and the significance of climate change in the global context. Senoko has allocated a sum of \$1 million over 2006 and 2007 to provide all participating schools with mini weather stations to measure and record weather data. Mr Roy Adair, CEO of Senoko Power elaborates on the competition's structure.

RY: The whole concept was based upon establishing a learning base. And the learning base was through the establishment of mini-weather stations in the schools. All participating schools receive a mini-weather station. This mini-weather station is capable of measuring rainfall, wind speed, wind direction, humidity and solar intensity. So it's an ability to access this basic data about the micro climate in the area and to discover trends. It would enable the students to access a whole series of learning objectives that cut across their whole syllabus, from geography, science to statistics and also in terms of the articulation and management of their project work.

The students will be involved in an intense period of preparation and execution of their respective projects between January and March next year. This period was chosen on advice from the Ministry of Education based on the demands of their academic syllabus. From then on begins a rigorous judging process.

RY: The April period is then taken up by preliminary judging whereby the school or college has to present to the preliminary judging panel on the basis of their projects, their findings and to lay out clearly the aspect of their content, the data that they have researched, where they have researched their data from, the support of their findings and the manner in which they articulate and present their project study. Every school is visited in their own environment and they also have the opportunity to present to their own school. As a result of the preliminary judging process, we then select the shortlist of candidates who will compose the final group of schools and colleges. From the final group we will then determine the overall prize winners and the ranking amongst those shortlisted contestants in the final judging process.

The judging process is carried out by partners involved in this competition, academics from the various institutions as well as members from the private sector. Key partners include the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources, the National Environment Agency, the National Parks Board, the Building and Construction Authority and the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore. Projects will be judged on several criteria.

RY: We have a range of objective criteria which covers the project content, the rigour of data analysis, the evaluation techniques involved, the originality of data, the context of the subject matter and also the degree difficulty associated with the topic area. Now those objective criteria are circulated to all participating schools and colleges. So they're well aware in advance of where the weight lies in terms of judging criteria.

The scale and nature of the competition attracted overwhelming response in its first year with 177 schools and colleges involved. This year, participation increased to 240 which essentially covers two-thirds of the school population here. But the organizers have decided to make it a biannual competition after next year. Mr Roy explains the reasons.

RY: One of the points of the feedback process was how often we should run this because the poor old teachers who got to organize the students, we rely very much on their feedback. We've obtained feedback from everyone involved and as a result of that after 2007, this will be biannual project which gives time for a more extensive data

collection and also for us to apply the lessons that have been learnt and also time to build up the appetite for having a crack at the competition in two years time. This will be sort of the National Weather Study Olympics.

Mr Roy encourages students to show no constraints in their research and initiative.

RY: We have been thoroughly impressed by the quality of the projects we have seen and the resourcefulness of the students. I think primarily, they have to bite of something that's manageable and doable. But within that let them have a look at this without constraints. The key piece of advice we would give this time is, instead of just looking at the micro climate or the Singapore wide climate, but to take a global context.

Climate change affects the environment on global scale. Competitions like this effectively tap the younger generation in helping them realize the concerns that arise out of this phenomenon.

RY: The report of climate change that has recently come out of the UK has been talking about the fact that we need to address now the issues of climate change otherwise, our children or grandchildren, the very students we were talking about, will be faced with a massive liability in the future. So we can actually look at it with a one percent impact on GDP now or face it later on with a twenty to twenty-five percent impact on GAP. So obviously it's an issue the world is fronting up to. Here we're ensuring that our student population is well informed about that very issue. So when they reach the position of decision makers, they would be doing so on a very informed basis.

As an exciting incentive, winners of the competition will get to travel and showcase their projects to an international audience.

RY: One of the other key messages I'd like to give is every participating school is a winner and every participating student is a winner. Now obviously in the competition itself there can only be one first prize. But I would say the winners of the first prize are given the opportunity to showcase their work internationally. Now the winners of last year's competition in all three categories went across to Queensland University Australia and were given the opportunity to showcase their projects at an international environment conference. They were also given the opportunity to showcase it in a couple of schools in Queensland itself. There was the added attraction of a few visits to the theme parks. And I'm not sure which the students enjoyed more the conference or the theme parks. But it was just reward for the hard work they had put in.

So how do teachers view this challenge? Mrs Christina Fong, a Geography teacher at Yusof Ishak Secondary School had this to say.

CF: This is the first time our school is participating in this National Weather Study Project Competition. I believe through this competition our students can learn experimental skills, to learn how to use data loggers, to record their experiments, to create awareness in them of the importance of the environment in relation to human beings and it will be a good experience for them to boost their self-confidence.

Ms Madeline Chen from the National University of Singapore High School of Maths & Science, talks about the project her students plan to embark on.

MC: Researching into the environment is actually very good for my students because a lot of them look at the big picture of sciences and when I asked them let's do some research on the environment, to them it'll look more like Applied Sciences. For example I have this group of students who are very interested in biology. So what they did, the Spidergirls and the Dustboys, that's their group names, are pretty innovative. The Spidergirls are interested in spiders, they were wondering how can they promote conservation of the flora and fauna because they are very interested in conservation. So when we looked at their interest and we talked about some research directions, we decided on the invertebrates and they decided that since spiders are quite easy to look out for. So they decided to research into spiders, go into respective literature, find out whether there is a correlation between changes in weather and spider behaviour.

In the next few months, we'll probably be seeing the participating students scattered around Singapore immersed in their research and experiments. Regardless of the final outcome, it is clear that this competition will play an important role in enriching the minds of the young.

Till next week, I'm Mubin Sa'adat. Stay tuned to Radio Singapore International.