



14th October 2020.

To whom it may concern,

NASA SPACE APPS 2020 COLOMBO – WITHDRAWAL OF “LOCAL PEOPLE’S CHOICE AWARD”

It is with regret we inform you that “Space Apps Colombo Local People’s Choice Award” has been withdrawn due to a violation of guidelines and all the participated teams have been disqualified, effective immediately.

In light of the recent incidents and concerns raised by the participants, we would like to clarify the reasons for withdrawing the award.

1. During the voting period, due of the heated and inappropriate conversations in the comments section, the organizing committee had to add the following disclaimer to the competition in order to avoid any possible damage that might happen to the titles “NASA Space Apps Challenge” and “Space Apps Challenge Colombo”.

Quote *We are not responsible for anything that happens in the comment section. It's social media behavior and It's a fact that everyone knows. We always said to respect every team but we can't control it.* **Unquote**

2. The organizing committee has received a number of complaints regarding “Fake Votes” both personally and on our social media channels. Therefore, the team added the following rules to the competition to hold a fair competition for all the participants.

Quote *The criteria for voting will be strictly considered to choose the winning team of the challenge. Therefore, please do consider the below statements.*

1. *The team which has votes from fake accounts will be disqualified.*
2. *An account will be considered as a fake account when it doesn't meet with the requirements of a real active account.*
3. *Quality above quantity is considered.*

Unquote

3. At the end of the voting period, the top 3 teams were as follow.
 - I. Mother Gaea - mission-planet-earth-digital-history – **6325 Votes**
 - II. Space Designers - lets-connect – **6140 Votes**
 - III. Angry Bird - nvent-your-own-challenge – **2944 Votes**

However, after a thorough discussion about the rules, procedures and guidelines, the organizing team decided to award team ‘Space Designers’ with the ‘People’s Choice Award’ and award team ‘Mother Gaea’ with the runner-up award.

4. Unfortunately, soon after the conclusion of the virtual awarding ceremony, some members of the organizing team have been threatened by a group of participants. Therefore, in order to protect the team members from any potential harm and to be fair for other competitors, the Organizing Committee has decided to disqualify all teams and to withdraw the award as per the rules.

Quote *Decision of the organizing team and judge board will be final despite the count of votes casted for the teams.* **Unquote**

5. NASA Space Apps Challenge is an open competition and participants are **registered as individuals** at the “signup” stage. After the registration, the participants can form teams among already registered participants all over the world at their choice. Therefore, “NASA Space Apps Colombo” will bear no responsibility over any disappointment caused to participants or school authorities for having used school names under the competition for publicity purposes during the voting period.

Authenticity of the event and the hosts.

NASA Space Apps Colombo is the entity that represents International Space Apps Challenge in local level allowing participants to participate in the international event representing the country. The local judges select the two global nominees according to the criteria provided by NASA and it is up to the local lead and local judges to decide on the local awards as per the “**NASA International Space Apps Challenge 2020 Judging and Awards Guide**”.

Quote *Following the hackathon, all solutions from each virtual location will be evaluated by a panel of Local Judges, organized by the respective Local Lead. Using the Space Apps judging criteria (see below), the panel will select two projects from among all submissions in their location to advance to Global Judging. Local Leads and Local Judges may also, if they wish, award local prizes. The team(s) that win local prizes will not necessarily be the same teams that advance to Global Judging. This will be determined by the panel of Local Judges.* **Unquote**

The Local Leads are the volunteers based in cities all around the globe who organize the Space Apps local virtual events. The Local Lead is officially appointed by Global Community Director and Storyteller of Space Apps Global Organizing Team.

Finally, we “NASA Space Apps Colombo” organizing team, would like to apologize for any inconvenience caused to any participant. We appreciate your understanding and the trust you have placed in us. We wish you all the very best for future endeavors and hope to see you all at NASA Space Apps Challenge 2021.

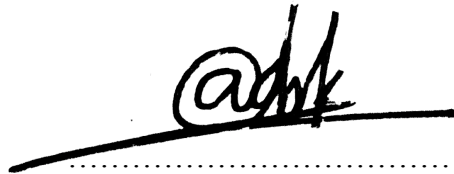
Sincerely,

The Organizing Team,
NASA Space Apps Challenge Colombo.

Signed by,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Thilan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

.....
Thilan Bandara
Local Lead
Space Apps Colombo.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anupa', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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Anupa Kulathunga
Co-Host
Space Apps Colombo.