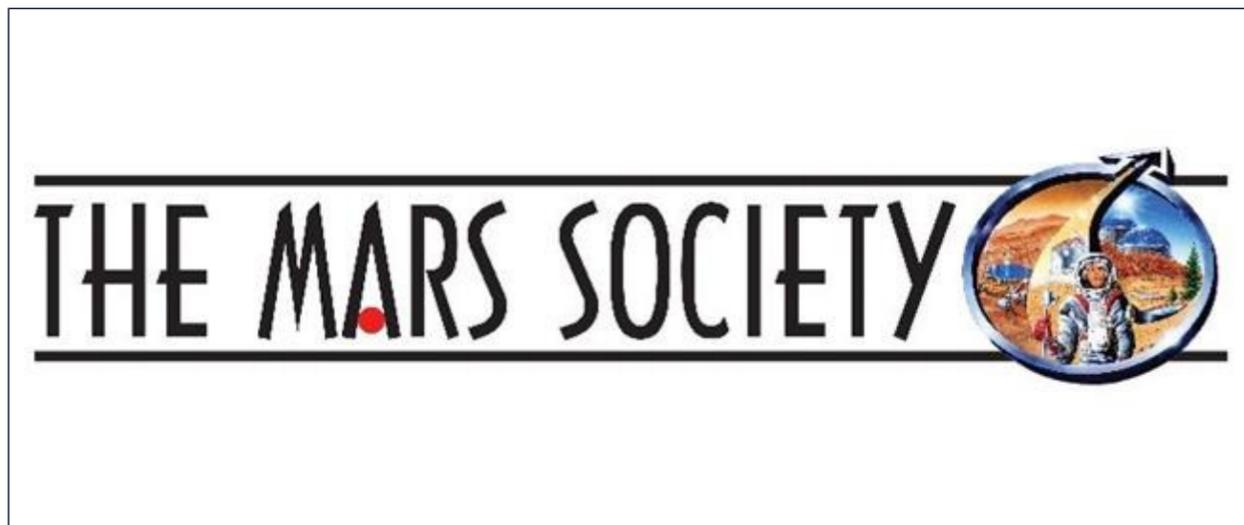


4 Delhi students among winners in Mars Art Contest 2017

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New Delhi : Four students from Delhi secured second and third positions in the US-based Mars Society's international "Student Mars Art (SMArt) Contest 2017", where they depicted a phase of humanity's future on the planet Mars, from first landing to full settlement.

The competition, announced in May, saw participation from over 140 students aged eight to 18 from across the world.

The art consisted of still images, composed by traditional methods, such as pencil, charcoal, watercolours or paint, or by computerised means and was submitted by the students via a special online form on

May 31.

The participants illustrated any part of the human future on the Red Planet, including the first landing, human field exploration, operations at an early Mars base, the building of the first Martian cities, terraforming the Red Planet and other related human settlement concepts.

"My painting is a depiction of the possibility of new life on Mars. This is the only planet after Earth which can be tested for evolution of life forms and hence we should definitely give it a good try," Devina Manchanda, a class three student, from GD Goenka Public School, Model Town, who won the second prize, said in a statement on Friday.

The contest was divided into three categories: Upper Elementary (grades 4-6), Junior High (grades 7-9), and High School (Grades 10-12).

While Manchanda received a cash prize of \$500 in the category of elementary school, the third place was a tie between Arna Kakkar, Gaurish Anand and Gopika Chawla, also from the same school, who received a cash prize of \$250 in the same category.

Japman Singh from KR Mangalam World School, Aditya Prakash from Bal Bharati Public School, Pitampura, Anvi Gaur and Rachit Birman from Sri Venkateshwar International School, Dwarka and Yash from Indraprastha International School, Dwarka, received an honourable mention and a certificate.

The students were part of the "Universe In The School Programme" -- a curriculum based academic educational programme -- of New Delhi-based Science Popularisation Association of Communicators and Educators (SPACE) organisation.

"We as an organisation and countrymen are proud and glad to see students excelling in their category, showing fantastic prowess in the innovation and creativity to the whole world," said Pankaj Bahmba, Director, SPACE.

The winning works of art will be posted on the Mars Society web site and may also be published as part of a special book about Mars art.

In addition, the student winners have also received a special invitation to join the "2017 International Mars Society Convention" at the University of California, Irvine from September 7-10, where their art will be displayed.

"We were amazed and delighted by the quantity and quality of Mars art produced by students from every continent. Many of these works are truly first rate! It is clear that young people around the world can see the vision of the human future in space, and can use art to allow others to see with their eyes what youth can already see with their minds," said Robert Zubrin, President at the Mars Society -- a volunteer-driven space-advocacy non-profit organisation.