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SCI-TECH

A Geek's taste of Endurance

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The biggest event for app developers and computer students took place in the city of Dhaka. From December 4 to December 5, BRAC University became a base ground for IT enthusiasts. BRAC, for the first time organised the biggest coding marathon of the country, named BRACathon. Their motto was 'technology for social good' and aim was to develop useful mobile applications to contribute in social innovation. More than 120 contestants from BRAC University, NSU, IUB, BUET, Ahsanullah University, and tech and start-ups including Empower and Miyaki participated in this competition.

Around thousands of IT aficionados applied to take part in this marathon from which 27 teams were selected. These teams were given a briefing session where they got tips from renowned IT specialists. On December 4, the 36 hours of coding began. This was when the participants worked till they dropped, coming out with new ways to prevent different social issues. From preventing fleet solutions to tuberculosis prevention, these groups took on every social challenge there is to take.

After the hectic 36 hours, the teams finally came to a stop, all establishing top grade apps. In the second part of the marathon, each team gave a presentation on their mobile app solution, in front of a jury board of 12 members. The jury board members included senior management from BRAC, representatives from DFID and Australian High Commission, faculties from BUET and BRAC University. The teams were judged on quality of the proposal, impact, innovation, functionality and presentation.

On December 6, the finals were announced on the closing ceremony of BRACathon. The award giving ceremony started with a panel discussion. Mr Anir Chowdhury, Policy Advisor of Prime Minister's office, Paul Whittingham, Deputy Country Representative, DFID (Department of International Development) Bangladesh were present among the other sector specialists. The discussion was moderated by BRAC and BRAC International's senior director Asif Saleh.

Appreciating BRAC's initiative at the prize giving ceremony, Mr Anir Chowdhury said, "Digital Bangladesh allows one person to do a lot of innovation. Digitalisation gives empowerment, if used correctly. Digital Bangladesh provides the opportunity of young leadership."

Deputy country representative of DFID Paul Whittingham said, "We are committed to bringing more young people in this field, so the voices are heard across. The best way to ensure that is through technology."

Though every team produced unique applications on different social solutions, based on the judging criteria only seven were elected as finals. Each of these seven teams will be given up to USD 3000 in order to help them finalise their apps. BRAC IT specialists will provide further assistance and guidance to these young developers to scale up. In addition to this, BRAC will also help them implement these apps to enhance its operational efficiency. They will also get the opportunity to participate in FBstart, a programme from Facebook which help mobile startups thrive by providing an exclusive community, worldwide events, mentorship opportunities, and up to USD 80,000 in free tools and services specific to social good developers. Additional benefits specific to mobile game developers include mentorship opportunities with the Games team at Facebook.