For both of us it was an exhilarating experience and it also had the enormous responsibility of representing our country.

From 24 to 27 October, 57 students from 20 countries and leading biotechnology experts were drawn closer to fuel further learning, discussion and interaction about global leadership, innovation and career paths in biotechnology. All these might sound quite mind-numbing but on the contrary the camp was a perfect blend of excitement, challenges, anticipation, and diversity.

The inauguration ceremony took place on the 25th, opened by Vincent Lee - Director, School of Pharmacy, the Chinese University of Hong Kong - and John C. Tsang, Financial Secretary of Hong Kong. The speakers from Novartis, Paul Herrling, Head of Corporate Research, and Marjorie Yang, Member of the Board of Directors underlined the fact that BioCamp is a prominent example of the Novartis commitment to promoting excellence in scientific education vis-a-vis the innovation in research and development. Of particular interest for the students were the presentations from Paul Herrling, George Daley from Harvard Medical School and Huanming Yang from the Beijing Genomics Institute, who provided a scientific update on research in biotechnology, whilst Corinne Savill, Head of BD&L, Search and Evaluation at Novartis, gave an overview on how to fund innovation.



During this four-day event, we worked with our peers, exchanged ideas and knowledge, and sew the seeds of future cooperation and synergy.

Apart from these presentations, each group was assigned with a disease area. The task of Rasidul's group was to develop a cure for the Parkinson's disease. We targeted the disease through mesenchymal stem cell therapy, which we had learnt from Professor George Daley of Harvard Medical School. Tahzeeb's group was assigned with macular degeneration. The competition included preparation of a business plan by each group for a particular drug that would cure the assigned disease. Since both of us were business graduates, we had little to do with drug development but we learnt about the diseases earlier as some extensive preparatory orientation was given by Novartis (Bangladesh) Limited prior to the competition. Since the entire presentation was on the business development process, we had to lead the entire team from the very beginning in order to make them more focused on making the plan more viable for an investment. When we started interacting with the students it became clear that our education on qualitative level is at par with others, only thing is that we lack exposure to technological advancement and hands on experience.

On the final day, we made our presentation and in the end, the students voted one of our two groups as the Best Participating Team. I (Rasidul Hasan) felt very joyous not only because of the fact that I achieved the award but also because I am a Bangladeshi who received such a distinction.

During this four-day event, we worked with our peers, exchanged ideas and knowledge, and sew the seeds of future cooperation and synergy. This experience has enriched us and equipped us with the vision to better our position in the corporate world. Novartis BioCamp is the place where we could benchmark ourselves with others. This feeling will certainly enhance our beliefs and broaden our vision.

To consolidate this through pointers we would say that the camp has helped us in following manner

-familiarized ourselves with current and future challenges of Biotechnology

-nudged our creativity in developing business ideas for international markets and instilled the concept of entrepreneur risk management

-given us the opportunity to network and learn from leading business and biotechnology experts

We also had the opportunity to explore Hong Kong through a short trip. Amongst the places that we visited were a historic temple that dates back to thousand years, the harbour, the old territory and the mountain top (locally known as 'the peak'). Hong Kong is a lovely city with a lot of skyscrapers all around. The night-life of Hong Kong is marvellous -- the streets are secure, and you will come across crowds even in the mid night.

Towards the end, we had a culture show called the "Culture Night". The culture night was another exciting part of BioCamp that added colour and vibrancy to the event. After a whole day of lectures, brainstorming, and presentations, it was very refreshing for each of the participants.

SEE PAGE 12