

# Battle of Minds 2014

## GROOMED TO SUCCEED

ADIT HASAN

It's that time of the year again: 'Battle of Minds', the pioneering business competition in the country is underway.

Battle of Minds is the flagship talent recruitment programme by and for British American Tobacco Bangladesh – the first of its kind and arguably the biggest. It is a tool through which the company can identify its future leaders and innovators. With past years proving hugely successful, this year was no less, as over 2200 final year students from universities all over the



Adrita Datta

country signed up for it online.

"Battle of Minds is a really important endeavour for us," said Adrita Datta, talent manager for BAT Bangladesh. "Since we are essentially choosing our future leaders and managers, we devote an enormous amount of time and energy to it. Instead of testing their technical knowledge on trivia and theory, we emphasise on presenting real-world problems to the candidates and assessing how they respond to them. Each year we visit different universities through road shows and invite potential entrants to join the competition. This year we tried to reach



universities outside Dhaka, such as Khulna University and Jahangirnagar University, through our road shows."

The competition started with the online application where, aside from entering personal information and academic history, candidates also had to answer open-ended questions to assess their creativity and reasoning ability. The online applicants were narrowed down to 140 candidates who moved on to the first round, which consisted of a group discussion. This was used to further whittle down the competitors to the top 60 candidates who were called in for the second round.

IBA, NSU, Khulna University, BUET, JU and IUT moved on to the second round. They were called in on November 26 and were encouraged to make friends with candidates from outside their universities and create their own teams for the day. Adrita Datta opened by delivering an inspirational speech to motivate them to tackle each obstacle head-on. Rumana Rahman, Head of Human Resources for BAT Bangladesh, then stepped out to talk about the purpose of Battle of Minds, followed by Shahed Zubair, Head of Corporate and Regulatory Affairs, who spoke about the legacy of the competition and its rightful throne as the pioneering business competition.

The participants were then sent to the grooming sessions where they were taught

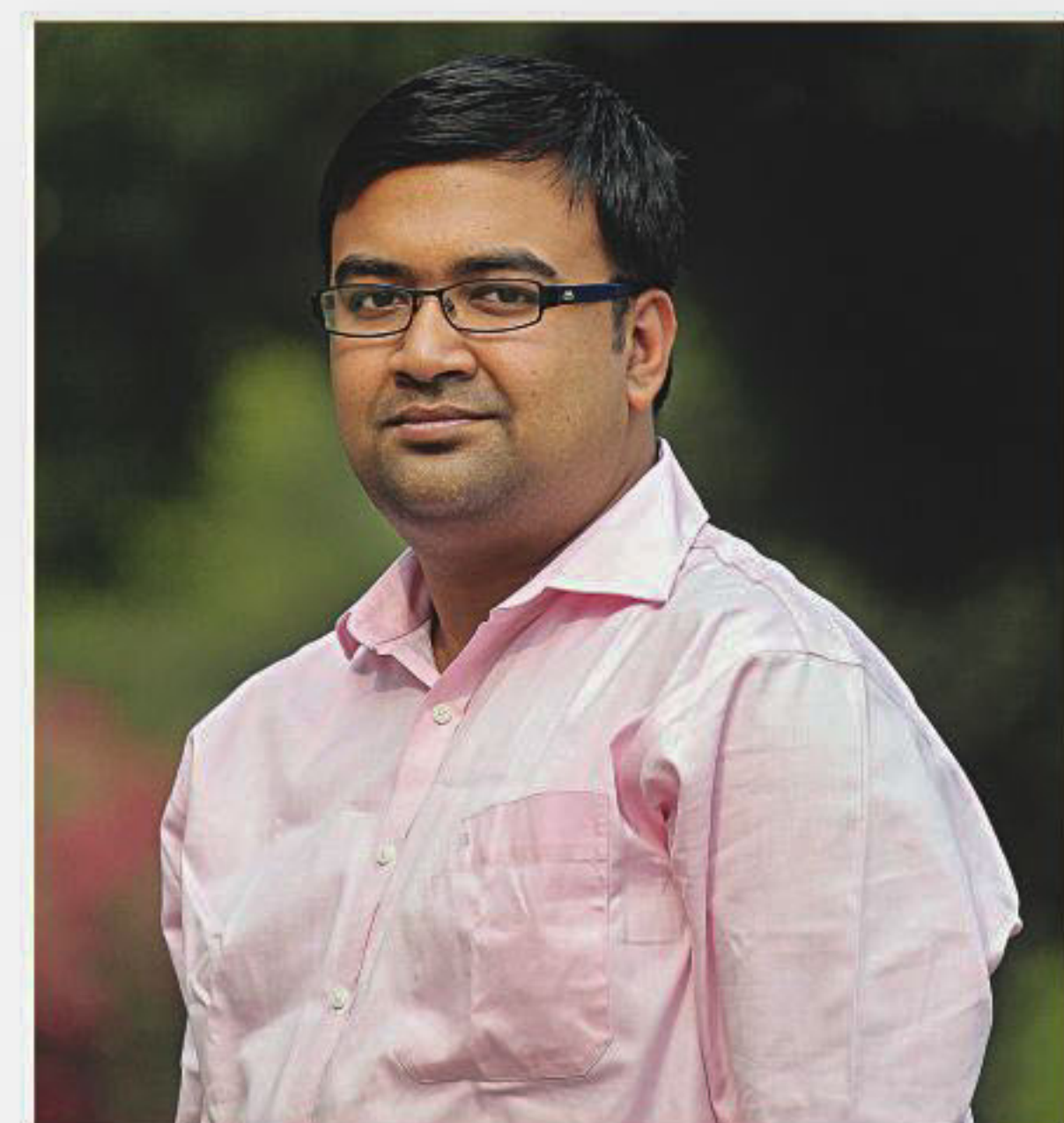
crucial skills that would help them succeed not just in the competition but also in their future careers. There were two sessions with the first one concentrating on communication and presentation, while the second one focused on lifestyle branding which would be the basis of their projects in the finale. After a brief lunch with the employees, William Pegel, Head of Finance at BAT, spoke to the participants. He spurred on the candidates and encouraged them to not hesitate to think big. He also shed some light on how BAT Bangladesh talents are appreciated across the BAT globe with 18 managers working in three different continents. He advised them to expect the unexpected as Battle of Minds attempts to push them to their limits and assesses how well they think on their feet. To drive the point home, he delivered the surprise of the day. Still under the impression that they were there for the grooming sessions, candidates were surprised to learn that they were being assessed as part of the semi-final round. During the course of the day, the top 20 candidates were chosen who would split into teams consisting of students from their respective universities for the third and final round.

So what makes Battle of Minds so special?

"Battle of Minds was widely-known as the business competition amongst the seniors even when I first joined my uni-

versity. It was something we all strove towards and spent a lot of time preparing for," said Rafid Ur Rahman, a final year BBA student from Khulna University – a competitor in this year's BOM.

"BOM is a benchmark for us. It is a way for us to compare ourselves to our peers and see where we would stand in the job market when we graduate," said Amitabh Guha Roy, from IBA, also a competitor in the 2014 BOM. "The competition has given us a chance to have hands-on experience of what it's like to be a top tier manager in a large company. The advice



Nabil Rahman

we received in the grooming sessions and the experience will prove invaluable when we graduate."

Nabil Rahman, a finalist from last year's BOM and a current employee at BAT Bangladesh, talked about how BOM is not just for business students. He, a civil engineer, was recruited just like any business student based on his abilities.

Over the years, other companies like Unilever have adopted similar methods to recruit talented graduates from the pool of universities. Considering BOM's success, it wouldn't be surprising for more to do the same.

Participants of Battle of Minds 2014

