



PHOTOS: DARSHAN CHAKMA

ADIT HASAN

The 8th of December saw the conclusion of this year's instalment of Battle of Minds, British American Tobacco Bangladesh's flagship talent recruitment program. The finale was held at Radisson Blu Water Garden hotel with the finalists; judges; BATB employees; and distinguished guests including BATB Chairman, Golam Mainuddin, and Board of Directors members Md. Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, Secretary, Ministry of Industries, Kamrul Hasan, Former Secretary, Ministry of Defence, Md. Fayekuzzaman, Managing Director, Investment Corporation of Bangladesh and K.H. Masud Siddiqui, Former Secretary, Ministry of Liberation War Affairs and the executive team from BATB and several members of the media in attendance.

After a long, arduous journey starting from the online application, followed by several intense rounds of fierce competition, five teams were chosen for the finals. The winners, along with the bragging rights, would gain a leg up in the rigorous recruitment process for BAT Bangladesh. The five finalists were given one last project: George's Café. The teams were instructed to propose a business plan for George's Café to adopt in the future. They were required to devise a plan to establish George's Café as a life-style brand, revealing its target consumers, their marketing strategy, proposed budget and projected profits; they even had to design a new look for the establishment. The teams were then provided 15 minutes to present their completed business plans to the judges in the presence of the guests at the finals.

On the evening of the 8th, the grand finale kicked off with the Head of Human Resources, Rumana Rahman appearing on stage to speak about how Battle of Minds had grown from one case study in one room with 16 students to receiving over 2200 applications from 18 universities. She also spoke about the success BOM has granted its competitors in different professional sectors. Adrita Datta, talent manager for BATB, followed her. She talked about how BATB sets a new benchmark every year



Managing Director of BATB, Shehzad Munim.

with BOM and is constantly attracting talented individuals from Engineering, Business and Agriculture departments of universities across the country. She went on to congratulate the finalists and say that BOM is a win-win opportunity since they learn from victory or defeat.

After a short video depicting the journey of BOM in 2014, the presentations started. The teams were allowed 15 minutes to present their business plans, and then walk the audience through the 3D model of their own version of George's Café and finally answer questions from the judges. The anxiety in the air was electric as the teams waited for their turns, huddling together for one last briefing.

After the presentations, the Chairman of BAT Bangladesh, Golam Mainuddin took the stage. He commended the BATB employees for their resilience and dedication, which allowed BATB to not only survive, but thrive for more than a century. He applauded the finalists for their remarkable performance and wished them the best of luck. Following suit the Managing Director, Shehzad Munim stepped on stage, commenting on BATB's policy of staying ahead by recruiting individuals with potential, capable of performing on the international stage. He spurred on the candidates, urging them

to be confident.

After awarding certificates to all finalists, it was time to announce the team that would be crowned this year's champions. The team from IUT was 2nd runner-up while the team from BUET clinched the 1st runner-up spot. The throne however belonged to IBA. Their version of George's Café attempted to recreate the quintessential Golden Age New York experience.

Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, Secretary, Industry Ministry and member of the Board of Directors, BATB says, "Such methods of recruitment have been proven successful. This kind of competition should be held more often to encourage the students."

"We were doing this not just for ourselves but also for our institutes," says Wahida Mashrura Shukh, also from the BOM squad. "The quality of the competition and the intense challenges we faced made this victory all the more rewarding and I would encourage my juniors to join BOM when their time comes."

When asked about the influence BOM had on students, Homayara Latifa Ahmed, assistant professor and chairperson of the career centre at IBA had this to say: "Aside from technical knowledge and theory, there aren't many chances for students in school to demonstrate their potential; BOM makes good students better by allowing them to hone other areas of their skill set."

"I was thoroughly impressed by the participants of this year's Battle of Minds, especially with the depth and breadth of their business analysis. It was exciting to see such fresh graduates compete for glory and what was more interesting was the participation of non-business institutions. That proves that proper grooming at a platform like Battle of Minds can minimize the gap among students from all types of background," says Shahed Zubair, Head of Corporate and Regulatory affairs and a judge at the 2014 BOM.

With this year's chapter drawing to a close, the victors with their heads held high enter the corporate game a little bit more prepared while their juniors mark the dates on the calendar, waiting for their chance to prove their mettle at next year's Battle of Minds.



Winners receive their trophy.



The panel of judges.