

# A call to arms in computer programming

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Bangladesh Advanced Computing Society (BACS) was recently established to promote competitive programming and to bring about excellence and enrichment in the field of programming in Bangladesh. It is spearheaded by its Chairman, Dr. Mohammad Kaykobad, Professor of Computer Science and Engineering department, BUET.

ACM International Collegiate Programming Contest (ACM-ICPC) is a prominent programming contest which possesses a large participation of thousands of students from hundreds of universities spanning over six continents. First promoted as a multi-tiered programming competition in 1977, it is so well-known and prestigious that the top scorers are hired by the best tech companies in the world. Generally, students that participate in ACM-ICPC are specially trained to sustain such a tough competition.

But the students of Bangladesh have been deprived of this opportunity, as there was no intensive programming training for many years in the country. In fact, during the last 20 years, a nationwide training was held only in three years, where only about 250 people were allowed to participate in each year. In order to rectify this situation, BACS has taken the initiative to organise regional and national level training camps for 1000 students every year. This surely will

provide a magnificent opportunity for the youths of Bangladesh to showcase their distinctive skills on an international level.

The final round of ACM-ICPC is usually dominated by students of China, Russia, and the European countries as regular residential camps are conducted for them. For the first time ever in

to train the top 1000 CSE students of Bangladesh to give them the appropriate, thorough preparation needed to excel at the ICPC Finals.

The selection process to find students worthy of being trained in the camps were chosen via an online competition held on Toph, which is a sports programming

contest held on July 7, 2017. After the selection process, the regional camps were held. Hasnain Heickal Jami, Lecturer, University of Dhaka was acting as the Camp Coordinator of all those camps.

The first one took place in Chittagong and was organised by the BGC Trust University Bangladesh. From July 20-22, the three-day event had 82 participants. The Khulna regional camp was held at Khulna University of Engineering & Technology (KUET) from August 24-26, participated by 91 students. Rajshahi regional camp was held at University of Rajshahi from September 14-16 with 46 participating students.

Finally, the Grand National camp was held in Dhaka, from October 4-8. The camp brought together 249 eager students striving to reach excellence in programming. Bangladesh University of Business and Technology (BUBT) was welcoming enough to organise the national camp for the third time, and with the help of their Department of CSE and BUBT IT Club, BACS was able to organise a successful event. This camp had participants in Beginner (71), Intermediate (99) and Advanced (79) groups.

It was inaugurated by the Chairman of BUBT Trust AFM Sarwar Kamal and was graced by eminent author and ICT expert Dr. Muhammad Zafar Iqbal and Prof. M Kaykobad, who was the chief guest. AFM Sarwar Kamal and Md. Shakhwat Ahamed, Head of Marketing, PRAN Foods Ltd. were present as special guests.



Bangladesh, BACS organised three divisional camps in Chittagong, Khulna, and Rajshahi along with a national camp in Dhaka. Dr. Shazzad Hossain, Associate Professor of North South University and the General Secretary of BACS, has played a remarkable role in this endeavour. Known as the Regional Programming Camps (RPC - 2017), these camps aimed

platform in Bangladesh. From 103 universities throughout Bangladesh, 1792 students registered out of which 983 students were from Dhaka, 323 from Chittagong, 155 from Khulna, 137 from Sylhet, 116 from Rajshahi, 39 from Barisal, 31 from Rangpur and 8 from Mymensingh. From the registered participants, 1072 participated in the selection

## Let's talk about faith

A CORRESPONDENT

Faith, is typified as the concern of the aged, even though our everyday lives are inevitably affected by our faith and we really could not talk about the experience of being ourselves without talking about the experience of being of our faith. And yet, it seems to grow harder to talk about our faith based experiences at all, even on social media, where the rise of hate speech and extremist viewpoints are increasingly creating a stifling atmosphere where talking about any of this is difficult.

Challenging this growing sense of being silenced is the recently launched 'Get Up Speak Up' initiative. Formed by a team of BRAC University students, Get Up Speak Up aims to salvage that space for dialogue and to bring people together. Get Up Speak Up recognises that without this dialogue, there can only be growing rifts between people who do not have an informed idea about each other's lives and experiences.

Get Up Speak Up is primarily a campaign that runs online, through their

Facebook page. However, as part of the project of taking back a space for discourse, the initiative held its first live event, a workshop titled "Matters of Faith", at the BRAC University campus on October 19, 2017. The workshop invited people of different faiths from BRAC University and elsewhere to come and talk about their experiences on issues such as interfaith relationships, inequity, dis-

crimination, and even the celebration of the many different religious festivals and holidays of Bangladesh.

In an informal arrangement, seated simply in a circle, participants were first asked to discuss different aspects of being of their faith, like the ease with which they can practice their beliefs, inequities they might have faced at work or at school. With the conversation thus flow-

ing, the participants discussed the nature of and reasons for these differences in their experiences. They were finally asked to ponder on possible solutions, which sparked discussions and debate among the participants which continued well after the workshop officially came to a close.

Faith is hardly a concern for only the aged. It touches all of our lives and shapes our lived experiences. The workshop made it clearer to the team behind the initiative that similar events need to be held at schools as well, given how real the need for these conversations is and how these issues touch the youth on a very personal level.

Rifat Rahman Turjo, a BRAC University student and participant in the workshop, said, "This is easily one of the best days I have spent at the university. I can't believe we actually got to have the discussion we did today, with people from outside the university too. With my midterms coming up in just a few days, this somehow helped my stress levels right now, like a weight lifted off my mind almost."

