



PHOTOS: BRITISH COUNCIL

FAMELAB 2018 NATIONAL GALA ROUND

The art of communicating scientific ideas

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On April 21, 2018, British Council hosted the national gala round of the first FameLab in Bangladesh at its University of Dhaka premises. Twelve finalists from across the country came together to celebrate and communicate their enthusiasm and passion for science at the event.

The event was powered by First Security Islami Bank Ltd., supported by ICT Division of Bangladesh, and produced and created by Cheltenham Festivals.

FameLab, an international science communication competition, takes place each year in over 30 countries worldwide with the vision to encourage and inspire the youth to explore and innovate in all areas of science. The rules of the competition are simple: one scientific idea is to be presented in 3 minutes without the use of any technological devices. However, props can be used on the stage while speaking, singing, dancing or even acting as long as the idea presented is scientifically accurate. The competition aims to help science enthusiasts and innovators reach out to the average individual, keeping in mind that communication is an essential part of integrating a scientific idea.

The competition kicked off with 158 applicants from all over the country who submitted their ideas and registered for the competition. From there, contestants were invited to the "heats" to present their ideas in front of judges who evaluated them based on 3Cs: Content, Clarity, and Charisma. Each contestant had 3 minutes to explain a concept by the means of only raw creativity and speech. After a tough contest, 12 finalists were selected to take part in the national gala round.

The selected finalists went through an intensive grooming session with British scientist and adventurer Huw James, who taught the finalists on how to communicate with the general audience in an articulate manner via effective storytelling. They learned about how to be precise without being verbose and even learned non-verbal skills that are important for performing on stage.

One of the participants, Mahmudul Hasan, currently working as an Assistant Professor at Department of Pharmaceuticals and Industrial Biotechnology, Sylhet Agricultural University, spoke to us about his idea for the grand finale, "I talked about anti-oxidants and how they

help us tackle the ageing process, which is accelerated by free-radicals from our food consumption and lifestyle."

After all 12 finalists had presented their topic of choice in front of jury and audience members, it was time for the awarding ceremony. Faye Nicholls, Teaching Centre Manager, British Council started off with the welcome speech followed by speeches by Prof. Dr. M. Omar Rahman, Vice Chancellor, Independent University Bangladesh, and mathematician and scientist Dr. Timothy Green, who spoke of the brilliance showcased



Alvee Islam of North South University, winner of FameLab 2018 National Gala Round.

by all the participants.

Zunaid Ahmed Palak, Minister of State for ICT Division, was also present and gave a speech as the chief guest where he thanked British Council for bringing FameLab to Bangladesh and providing young science enthusiasts with a platform for reaching out to the general public.

"No country can sustain without scientific research. The ICT division of Bangladesh is allocating funds to help students from universities all over the country to

have the necessary equipment and labs to do research and work towards a Digital Bangladesh," said the State Minister. He also encouraged the finalists to submit any ideas they have to the iDEA (Innovation, Design and Entrepreneurship Academy) of the ICT Division.

Syed Waseque Mohammad Ali, Managing Director, First Security Islami Bank Ltd. came up to the stage and thanked British Council and the State Minister of the ICT Division for providing such a platform and encouraging the youth to learn more about science.

After his speech it was finally time to announce the winner. The participants were called up on stage and given crests for their successful participation in the competition.

Alvee Islam, fourth-year student of EEE from North South University was crowned the winner and received the ticket to Cheltenham Science Festival in UK, where he will represent Bangladesh at the international finals of FameLab.

"I presented the topic of neuro-plasticity that explains how your brain changes when you learn new things," said Alvee. "I am very excited about going to the Cheltenham Science Festival. I don't know what's going to happen, but I am glad I could be a part of this competition and it has been a great journey."

Another participant, Farhana Nusrat, final-year student from MAG Osmani Medical College, Sylhet, said, "I acquired a lot of skills from being a part of FameLab. I learned a lot about presenting from Huw James and had a great time talking about ideas and sharing the same enthusiasm for science with other finalists."

Aasha Mehrin Amin, Deputy Editor, Editorial & Op-ed, The Daily Star shared her thoughts on FameLab, "Science students in Bangladesh face a lot of challenges due to the lack of facilities and we know scientific research is crucial for the human kind to survive. We need students and the general public to know and understand more about scientific ideas and FameLab provides an excellent platform for communicating these ideas to the masses."

The ceremony ended with refreshments and with pictures with the guests and finalists with hopes of having more competitions like these in the future to keep encouraging the youth to learn and share.

SHOUT was the Youth Engagement Partner of FameLab 2018 National Gala.