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Mechanical DREAMS

Arman R. Khan



Photo: Darshan Chakma

On 7th February, 2014, Engineering Students Association of Bangladesh (ESAB) organised the Q-Cash National Robotics Festival 2014 at National Sports Council, Dhaka. Over 500 bright young minds, in 140 teams, participated in the event -- the largest robotics competition on the national level this year. The participants included not only enthusiastic university students, but also school and college level students who are interested in the field of robotics.



Photo: Darshan Chakma

The chief guest at the event was Nazrul Islam Khan, Secretary, Ministry of ICT. In his inaugural speech, the chief guest said, "We will diffuse our innovations and learning in the society through this platform." He also thanked Q-Cash and praised the initiative of Engineering Students Association of Bangladesh.

Md. Harun-Or-Rashid, Deputy Director, DSS, Ministry of Social Welfare, was present as special guest. Thanking ESAB, he asked all engineering students to keep this spirit alive.

Dr. Khalilur Rahaman, Associate Professor, Department of CSE, BRAC University, inspired the young participants by saying, "This time we are making robots, but in the future, Bangladesh will make cars, satellites, space crafts etc. Yes, we can take this further! Those present here today can inspire the future generations."

Among others, Dr. Kazi Saifuddin Munir, Managing Director and CEO, Q-Cash; Dr. Md. Atiqur Rahman Ahad, Assistant Professor, Department of APECE, University of Dhaka were present at the programme.

The festival was divided into four parts: iARC, Battle of Speed, Exploring the Dream and Robots Got Freedom. For Battle of Speed, the contestants had to each build a robot that could follow a line and complete a track without human intervention; the robot that takes the shortest time in completing the journey wins. Team BUET Exponential emerged victorious in this race, as BUET Burgers and Pegasus (BUET) finished on the second and third places respectively.

Robots Got Freedom was an interesting segment. The participating teams had to design intelligent robots that could talk, walk, fly, and more, and thus facilitate our lives. Numerous ideas and projects came up in this segment that can revolutionise the robotics industry in Bangladesh. Among others, there was a robot that could imitate your moves (pretty much like in the movie "Real Steel"), flying drones etc. The participants explained to the questioning visitors the mechanism of their innovations as well, during the exhibition period. The winning team for this segment was Team Durjoy (Khulna University). Team Sporsho (MIST) was the runner-up, and Team Zontrovuj 1.0 (PUC) was announced the second runner-up.

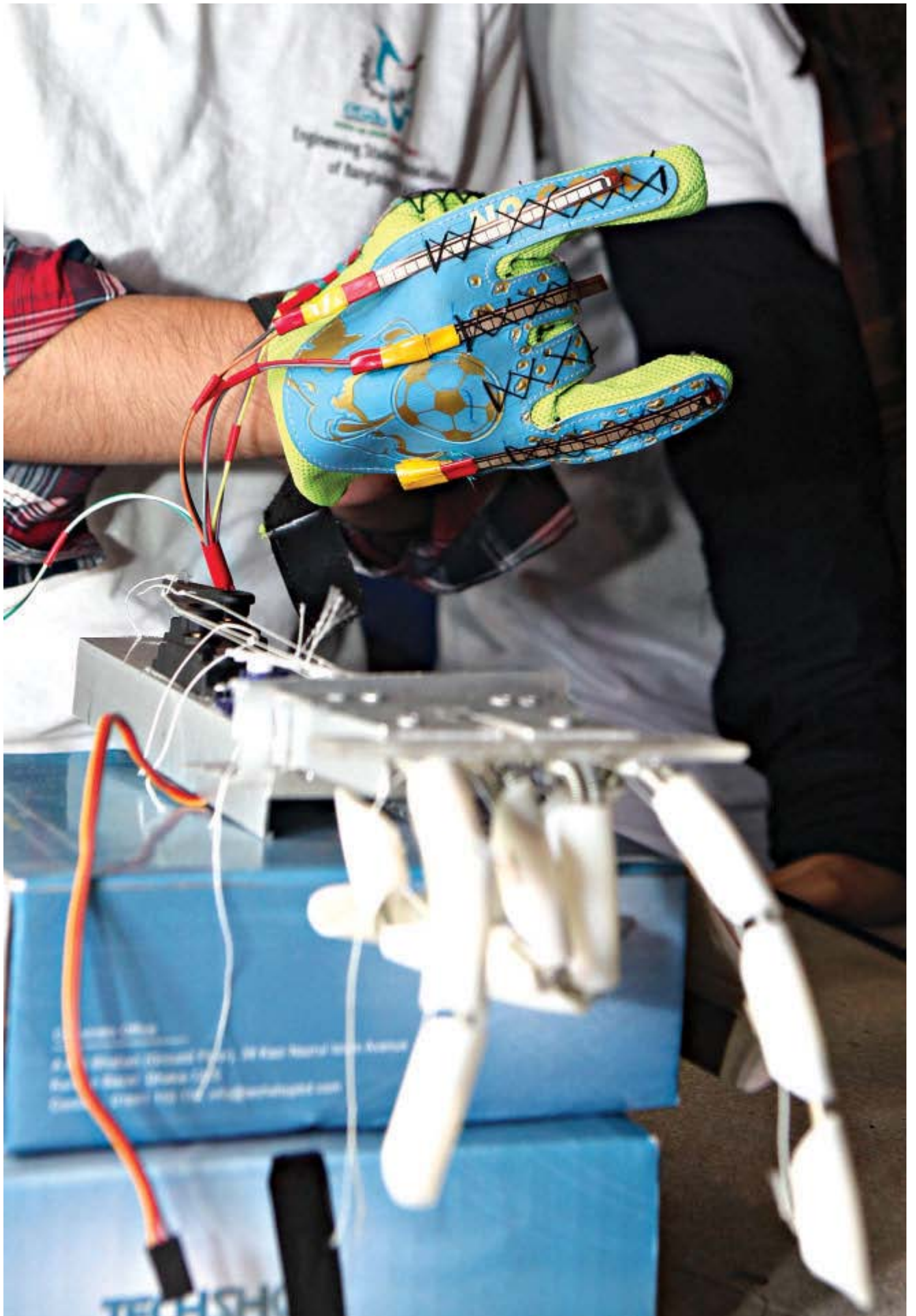


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Exploring the Dreams, solely for the school and college level students, was the segment where budding young minds came up with ideas about robots that they believed were feasible. Many bright and innovative ideas came out through this segment, which was indeed designed to encourage interested school students to pursue careers in the field of robotics. The winning team, Imagine Dragon, and runner-up, Shopnochari, were both from Rajuk Uttara Model College, while another runner-up team was Shonjibon from Viquirunnisa Noon School and College.

Techkriti'14, IIT Kanpur, is one of the largest robotics competitions in the world, where participants from ten countries are set to participate early next month. The iARC segment of Q-Cash National Robotics Festival 2014 was in fact the Bangladesh Round of this esteemed contest. The participants here had to build a smart robot that could follow lines and complete a maze. In case of dead ends, the robots must turn around and find the correct path that would lead it to its destination. This was rather challenging, as some of the robots got stuck following dead ends over and over; but there were many other robots that could actually solve the maze with ease. Team BUET Exponential won iARC as well, with Team Timeout (DUET) as the runner-up.

The innovations were judged by a jury consisting of Professor Dr. Md. Shafiul Alam, Department of Applied Physics, Electronics and Communication Engineering, University of Dhaka; Dr. Md. Khalilur Rhaman, Associate Professor, Department of CSE, BRACU; Sukarna Barua, Assistant Professor, Department of CSE, BUET; Mohammad Asif Zaman, Assistant Professor, Department of EEE, BUET; Ebad Zahir, Assistant Professor, Department of EEE, AIUB; and Dr. Shahera Hossain, Assistant Professor, Department of CSE, University of Asia Pacific.

Participant Anan Adrita informed, "NRF 2014 was a totally new experience and undoubtedly a great opportunity for us. Making a robot ourselves and watching such good innovations around were indeed a pleasure."

Another participant Munif Ishad Mujib said, "NRF 2014 was a competition of great magnitude. It's a positive step taken, and I'm glad that the government is encouraging such activities."

Md. Arif Raihan Maahi, General Secretary of ESAB, who was the coordinator of this phenomenal event, said, "These young engineers of Bangladesh are national assets, and this festival proved the potential of our country. Bangladesh should become a technologically advanced country within 10 years. But we must need to nurture these young and innovative minds. Industry and Government collaboration may open a new orientation of this sector in our country."

The National Robotics Festival 2014 was powered by Ministry of Information & Communication Technology. Q-Cash was the Platinum, Polar Ice Cream the Gold, and OMECA the Silver sponsors of the event. Bangladesh Association of Software & Information Services (BASIS) was the strategic partner. NRF 2014 was supported by Investment Corporation of Bangladesh, Spellbound Communications Ltd, n2sys Technology and Muspana. FFC was the Food Partner, while Shomoy TV, Radio ABC and The Daily Star were the Media Partners of the event.

The National Robotics Festival 2014 was a platform that encouraged finding creative solutions to technological and social problems using robots. In fact NRF 2014 has become the largest robotics festival of its kind in South Asia. It can be expected that this festival will go on to become the largest technological event in Bangladesh, and that the local industry of robotics will prosper in the upcoming years.