

2008/december

## **Mathematics and Natural Sciences (MNS) Update**

### **Condolence for Professor G. D. Roy (1949-2008)**

Professor Gouranga Dev Roy of the Department of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, BRACU passed away on Thursday, December 25, 2008 at his residence in Mirpur, Dhaka. A condolence meeting was held at the conference room of the MNS Department on Saturday, December 27, 2008 chaired by Professor A. A. Ziauddin Ahmad. Departmental faculty members were present in the meeting to pay their respects to the departed soul.

Prof. Mofiz Uddin Ahmed, Prof. Amin Hasan Kazi, Prof. Naiyyum Choudhury, Prof. Amal Krishna Halder spoke on the occasion and reminisced about their association with Prof. G. D. Roy. Ms. Sharmina Hussain, Md. Anisur Rahman and Mr. Shamim Azad also expressed their deep sorrow at this untimely demise of a dear soul. All the speakers were unanimous in appreciating the rare qualities in Professor Roy's character like utmost devotion, sincerity of purpose and whole hearted commitment to his students. He strove towards the betterment of the department and always stressed on the need of doing research along with teaching. The meeting stood in silence for one minute to show respect to the departed soul.

After completing B.Sc (Hons.) degree in Mathematics from the University of Dhaka, Prof. Roy obtained his MSc Degree in Applied Mathematics from the same university. He earned his Ph.D degree from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), New Delhi, India. He served as a Professor at Shahjalal University. He joined BRAC University in 2004. Then he went to Malaysia and taught there for a couple of years. He then rejoined BRACU in January, 2008. Professor Roy was actively associated with the Bangladesh Math Olympiad. He is the author of the book "Ektukhani Ganit". He was also engaged in many research work. His positive attitude, humility and enthusiasm always motivated his colleagues and students. His dreams were around mathematics, but the deadly disease of cancer took him away from his dreams.

Professor Gouranga Dev Roy left behind his wife, a son and a daughter. A condolence message was later sent to his wife Mrs. Swati Dev Roy on behalf of the Department of Mathematics and Natural Sciences.

### **ICGEB-BRACU Symposium on Biosafety and Regulatory Issues**

BRAC University and the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), Italy organized a three day long International Symposium on Safety and Regulatory Issues in Commercialization of Biotechnology Research in Developing Countries on 2-4 December 2008. The Symposium was held at the RDEC Bhaban, LGED Headquarters, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka. Various issues covered by the Symposium included technology transfer, biosafety, bioethics, IP and IPR. The symposium was inaugurated by Dr. C.S. Karim, Advisor to the Caretaker Government for Agriculture and Water Resources. Mr. Manik L. Samaddar, Special Assistant to the Chief Adviser in-charge of MoSICT was present as the Special Guest. Others who spoke on the occasion were: Dr. M.H.A. Hassan, Executive Director, TWAS; Professor Jamilur Reza Choudhury, VC, BRAC University, and Chairperson, Organizing Committee; Professor Shamsheer Ali, President, Bangladesh Academy of Sciences; and Professor Naiyyum Choudhury, Coordinator, Biotechnology Programme, BRAC University. A large number of foreign experts took part in the Symposium. Among the foreign speakers were: Prof. V.S. Chauhan, Director, ICGEB, India; Prof. Ulf Petrusson, Director, CIP, Sweden; Dr. Tim Osslund, California State University Channel Islands Campus, USA; Prof. Timothy Caulfield, University of Alberta, Canada; Prof. Kalyan Das, Rutgers University, USA; Prof. J. Kinderleler, University of Cape Town, South Africa; Dr. Mark Tepfer, ICGEB, Italy; Prof. Glenda Gray, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa; Dr. M.C. Somavillas, Centre for GEB, Cuba; Prof. A.L. Ibrahim, International Islamic Academy for Life Sciences and Biotechnology, Malaysia; Dr. V. Siva Reddy, ICGEB, New Delhi, India; Mr. D. Ripandelli, ICGEB, Italy; Dr. H. Subramanian, IP Attorney, India; and Prof. A.A. Azad, TWAS Professor, BRAC University. A large number of local participants from different universities and research organizations presented papers on themes of the Symposium. Prof. Naiyyum Choudhury and Dr. Aparna

Islam presented papers on biosafety, and on collaboration in capacity development, respectively.

### **Launching of BS Programme in Applied Physics & Electronics**

A four year B.S. programme in Applied Physics & Electronics will be started in Spring 2009 under the Department of Mathematics and Natural Sciences. This programme is designed to provide opportunity for the students to progressively acquire a thorough knowledge in the basic concepts and skills of the central topics of applied physics and electronics along with the required mathematical tools. The programme of study also includes courses for improving and strengthening basic science background and acquainting the student with the socio-economic & historical background of Bangladesh. The total credit requirement for the degree is 130. Out of these 21 credits are for general education. Nineteen major area compulsory courses account for 57 credits. The students are required to complete 4 courses (6 credits) of Applied Physics and Electronics Labs and write a dissertation/report on a suitable thesis/project topic. The thesis/project work spread over the last two semesters will have a total of 3 credits. The students also are required to complete 15 credits choosing from several elective courses in their major field and 27 credits from outside their major specialization. They will undergo an internship programme (1credit) being attached to R/D institutions, electronics and IT firms etc. They may also be required to take non-credit remedial courses in English (Eng091) if considered necessary.

### **Seminar on Biosafety at the Research Centre for Mathematical and Physical Sciences ( RCMPS), Chittagong University**

Professor Naiyyum Choudhury was invited by the Research Centre for Mathematical and Physical Sciences (RCMPS), Chittagong University to give a seminar on biosafety. The seminar was held at the auditorium of the RCMPS on 18 December, 2008. Professor Choudhury presented his seminar entitled "Biosafety and Regulatory Issues: National and International Perspectives". A large number of academic staff and postgraduate students of different departments participated in the seminar and took active part in the discussion.

### **Departure for Higher Studies**

Ms. Fahmida Homaaya, Lecturer in Statistics at the MNS Department recently left for Master of Science (Research) Programme at The University of New Brunswick, Canada. She has received institutional full scholarship to complete her degree. Mr Md Maruf Ahmed, Lecturer in Mathematics recently left for Master Programme at The University Southern Illinois Carbondale, USA.

## **School of Public Health (SPH) Update**

### **MPH Programme**

The 4th batch of the MPH Program has successfully finished the program. On the occasion of the successful completion of the fourth MPH Programme, the James P Grant School of Public Health organized " Graduate Forum" at Sasakawa Auditorium of ICDDR, B on December 22, 2008. Dr. Salehuddin Ahmed, Pro-Vice Chancellor of BRAC University chaired the Forum.

### **Events**

#### **Fourth Graduate Forum**

The MPH 4th batch students completed their year-long course after an intense year of hard work. On the afternoon of December 22, 2008, the fourth graduate forum of the School was held.

With the graduation of the fourth batch, the School is contributing a total of 106 bright public health professionals to the world. The families, friends, faculty and well-wishers of the 29 students of the graduating batch gathered to share their blessings with the students at the Graduates- Forum. The forum organized every year as a way to showcase the students' dissertation and also to present provisional certificates and special awards from the School prior to the actual graduation ceremony of the University. This day is particularly significant for the students, since this is their final day of uniting as a batch before

the international students depart to go back to serve their respective countries with the knowledge they gained from this programme. International students of this batch came from Afghanistan, Uganda, United States, Tanzania, Myanmar, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Ethiopia and the Netherlands.

The Forum was chaired by Dr. Salehuddin Ahmed, Pro-vice Chancellor, BRAC University. Dr. Mushtaque Chowdhury, Dean of James P Grant School of Public Health, delivered the welcome address, while Dr. Stephen P Luby, Head of the Programme on Infectious Diseases and Vaccine Sciences at ICDDR,B, who is also a faculty of the School, made the keynote address.

Dr. Chowdhury in his address gave an overview of the School's activities and the achievements of the students and faculty over the past four years. He paid tribute to Dr. Allan Rosenfield of Columbia University who has been a great promoter and supporter of the School. A 30 seconds silence was observed in the memory of Professor Rosenfield during his speech. Dr. Chowdhury then talked about the MPH alumni, the short courses and trainings that the School is offering, the research projects, the centres, publications of the School, its coverage in the media and also about other initiatives such as the Bangladesh Health Watch. This was a special day for him as well since this would be his last speech at the graduates- forum as the Dean of the School. Representatives from the international and national students also shared their feelings and experiences at the forum.

Certificates were awarded to all students of the batch. Dr. Shahaduz Zaman, Associate Professor and Coordinator of the MPH programme announced the certificates and the awards. Four special awards were given to the students who demonstrated extraordinary overall performance, best dissertation and best posters. The FH Abed Award for the best performing international student went to Dr. Takele Teshi Chala from Ethiopia; the Allan Rosenfield Award for the best performing national students went to Dr. Md Taufiqul Islam Joarder, Dr. Hnin Su Su Khin received the WB Greenough III Award for best dissertation, and Sabrina Sharmin and Sujeeta Bajracharya (Shakya) jointly received the Richard Cash Award for Best Poster.

Four students presented their dissertation work at the forum. Dr. Sabina Faiz Rashid, Associate Professor of the School, coordinated the presentation session by students. Achan Everlyne from Uganda presented her work on "Disabled children in Dhaka: Access to Formal Health Care, Socio-cultural and Economic Perspectives"; Alicia Cooper from the US presented her paper on "Arsenic Mitigation through Community Mobilization: An evaluation of a safe water program in rural Bangladesh"; Sachin Juneja presented his work on "Migrant Women and Use of Maternal Health Services: A study at Urban slums in Jaipur, India"; and Md Taufiqul Islam Joarder presented on "Socio-cultural Dynamics in an Upazilla Health Complex".

Dr. Anwar Islam presented his vote of thanks. In his address, he thanked the students, faculty, and all the supporters of the School. He particularly mentioned the contribution of the departing Dean, Dr. Mushtaque Chowdhury in leading the School's growth to where it is today. Guests were then invited to visit the poster session by the students. Posters done by all students were displayed at the auditorium where they explained their work in detail after the Forum presentations were over.

### **Special dinner in Honor of SPH Dean Professor A M R Chowdhury**

Following the Graduate Forum, a Special Dinner in honor of the SPH Dean Professor A M R Chowdhury was arranged at the BRAC Centre Inn. Many of his colleagues, students and friends from BRAC University were present to wish him for his future endeavors as he departs from the School to assume the Regional Director's position with the Rockefeller Foundation. The dinner ended with a photo session and many heartfelt speeches.

### **ASG Seminar**

The Academic Study Group's in-house seminar was carried out on December 28 at BSPH Conference Room. The topic 'Gender and Sexual diversity in Bangladesh' was discussed by guest speaker Mr. Adnan Hossain, PhD candidate at the University of Hull. The presentation focused primarily on three marginal sexual/gender

subcultures (Hijra, Kothi and Gay) in contemporary Bangladesh. The speaker explained the fact that the Hijra (a community of 'males' identifying as 'not male' and desiring 'macho' males with extensive community rules) had been a widely visible subculture in the context of Bangladesh along with a Hijra-like subculture (Called kothis literally sissy men). The presenter used fascinating pictures in his presentation to explore the unknown subculture. At the end of the session there was a question-answer where Ms. Hillary Standing asked about the objective of the study followed by a lively debate regarding the relevance of the quantitative and qualitative research ...

### **Faculty activities**

Dr. Shahaduz Zaman, Associate Professor chaired a course titled 'Social, Political and Historical Dimensions of Infectious Disease at the Medical Anthropology Department of University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands from 1-13 December 2008.

Dr. Enamul Hasib, a research associate of James P Grant School of Public Health attended SAARC Second Conference on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Respiratory Diseases held in Kathmandu, Nepal, during December 15-18 to present his paper titled 'HIV Awareness of Injecting Drug Users of Dhaka'. The Honorable Prime Minister of Nepal Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal was present at the opening ceremony of the conference as Chief Guest. Invited guests expressed their commitment to fight HIV/AIDS and other opportunistic infection like tuberculosis, pneumonia because of HIV not only in Nepal but in the South Asia region also. The opening ceremony also included a cultural program and a lavish dinner at the poolside of Yak & Yeti Hotel.

Presentations were held simultaneously at three halls of Yak & Yeti hotel. In addition to free paper session there were plenary and poster session. Participants from all over the world came to attend the conference. The organizers did extremely well to attract medical and social science students to the conference. Papers presented in the conference covered issues like prevention of HIV; awareness; voluntary counseling and testing; dots; anti retroviral therapy; social stigma; drug addiction; availing ART by people of remote area and many more. There was a very interesting paper presented by a young medic doctor focusing on the use of internet as a mean of sex education for raising awareness to prevent HIV infection which triggered a lot of debate. There was a scope of meeting HIV infected patients in the conference who shared their feelings with the audience.

Dr. Hasib took the opportunity to display annual report 2007 of James P Grant School of Public Health at the exhibition hall and it was really liked by the attendants. There were overwhelming comments and remarks not only on the activities of the school but also on the quality and design of the report. Many students inquired about the academic activity of the school. The conference ended on 18th December with a promise to fight hand in hand against the deadly disease.

## **English and Humanities (ENH) Update**

### **Inauguration of ENH in new premises**

The Department English and Humanities recently moved to the newly renovated 13th floor of Aarong House. Faculty members and students held a cultural function on 3rd December 2008 to inaugurate the department in its new premises. The program was held with great fanfare, and attended by ENH faculty members, students, and even department alumni.

### **Undergraduate Thesis Presentation**

As a requirement of the ENG 466: Thesis course, two graduating students (Fall 2008) of the Department of English and Humanities gave their thesis presentations on 17th December 2008. The following is a list of thesis presentations given by the graduating students:

Sharmin Chowdhury Sumi: "Feature Writing and Cultural Reporting: An Experience at NEW AGE, The Daily

Newspaper"

S.M. Abu Layes Khan: "Different Aspects of a Newspaper - A Case Study on NEW AGE"

### **Master's Thesis Presentation**

As a requirement of the ENG 699: MA Thesis course, Md. Monjurul Islam, a graduating MA student (Fall 2008) of the Department of English and Humanities gave his thesis presentation on 28th December 2008. His presentation was titled "Teacher's understanding and practice of CLT in Higher Secondary Level of Bangladesh."

## **BRAC Development Institute (BDI )Update**

### **Three Day Training on Participatory Video Making**

A three day training on Participatory Video Making was held at the BDI office from Dec 13th 14th and 15th and was conducted by Samir Ahmed a trained professional filmmaker from The Pune Film Institute. The training was a part of the capacity building mechanism for all BDI staff involved in research and communications. By the end of the training the participants learned how to operate a video camera, create story boards and make documentary.

### **BDI to launch Certificate Course on "Land Acquisition and Resettlement" in collaboration with Indira Gandhi Open University(IGNOU),Delhi in May**

BRAC Development Institute will be launching a certificate course from May 2009. on "Land Acquisition, Resettlement and Rehabilitation" in collaboration with the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in Delhi. The need for this course arises from the mass resettlement of populations across the country as a result of infrastructural development. The course curriculum is aimed towards professionals working in this field.

## **BRACU Student receives Symbian Award (London) 1000 pound**

"The next wave of Smartphone innovation: Issues and opportunities with Smartphone technologies" was the overall theme for Symbian's (UK) first student essay contest. During the months of summer and early autumn 2008, students worldwide worked on essays addressing aspects of possible breakthrough applications and markets for Smartphones. Essays received were evaluated by Symbian judges for their degree of relevance, insight, clarity, readability, originality, evidence provided, and technical expertise. Numerous thought provoking and intelligent entries were received which made the judging process difficult. Finally, Iftekhar UI Karim, student of BRAC Business School, BRAC University became one of the winners of the Symbian Contest (London) and received a prize of 1000 pound, for his innovative essay, "Opportunities with Smartphone technologies for the base of the pyramid." Iftekhar's essay challenges readers to consider novel uses of Smartphones for users in the so-called 'base of the pyramid' - the four billion poorest people on the planet.

## **BRACU Students presented their projects at University of Witten, Germany**

Oikos conducted its 5th oikos Winter School at the University of Witten/Herdecke, Germany and brought together students and future decision makers from around the world in an interactive think tank on sustainable economics and management. Under the patronage of the European Parliament President, Prof. Dr. Hans-Gert Pottering, three students from BRAC Business School, BRAC University got selected for this effective coaching session and represented Bangladesh as sustainability project apprentices. Sadia Naureen Huq presented her project on "Water Purification & Storage Systems in Bangladesh", Sabbir Hossain Chowdhury presented his project on, "Emerging Bangladesh" and Iftekhar UI Karim (Student-Rep, oikos-Dhaka) presented his project on "Micro-Sustainability for the Bottom of the Pyramids (Focus: Delta)". The students received certificates as recognition to their apprenticeship. German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) Bangladesh sponsored the entire tour with due dignity.

## **BRAC Business School: Competed in the Final Round of YBD Challenge, University of Oxford (UK)**

The Youth Business Development (YBD) competition, run by Said Business School, University of Oxford is a social enterprise empowering young people to think critically about how they can make the world a better place, and then provides them with the opportunity and tools to bring about change. The team BRAC Business School comprising Samia Mahjabeen Khan, Sabbir Hossain Chowdhury and Iftekhar UI Karim (Team Leader) by degrees became one of the finalists with their Project One District One Product. The project dealt with a fully district-categorized commercial zone with a 'T+T' approach (merging Tradition with Technology) and offered pragmatic solutions to inflation, market intermediaries and food crisis. Oxford University MBA Mentor of the project was Mr. Joby Babu and the Local Liaison Mentor (LLM) of the project was Mr. Md. Khaleq Newaz, Lecturer of BRAC Business School, BRAC University.

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