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Report on the Launching



BRAC launches the prestigious Manthan Awards in Bangladesh

BRAC launched the prestigious Manthan Digital Innovation Award (BMDIA) 2016, on 10 April, for the first time in Bangladesh. The award, an off-shoot of the Manthan Awards in India, promotes the use of technology for the development and focuses on newer digital and mobile innovations.

BRAC in partnership with Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), an India-based non-profit launched the awards on National Press club today. Manthan Award, initiated in 2004 by Digital Empowerment Foundation promotes and recognises the contributions of individuals and organisations in the field of ICT for development.

Upon launching, deputy programme manager of DEF Ravi Guria said, “Bangladesh has been one of the most prominent participants in the Manthan award for years. We have to create an environment for the young innovators to make innovations that can have a positive impact in the most marginalised people of the country. This is why we are launching Manthan in Bangladesh.”

From this year, Bangladeshi applicants will only be able to participate in the Manthan Award in India by winning the BRAC Manthan Digital Innovation Award in Bangladesh. Appreciating this initiative Anisul Hoque From Prothom Alo said, “ten years before, a child from Bangladesh’s Char area could not even imagine to have quality education, but thanks to technology, today we can ensure that. A child living in the remotest Char area can have the same education like a child living in the city. So we have to encourage the youth of our country to participate in this kind of initiatives which will take our country forward in the coming days.”

The nine categories of the BMDIA 2016 are: e-business and financial inclusion, e-education, learning and employment, e-agriculture and ecology, e-governance and institutions, e-health, e-women, inclusion and empowerment, e-news, journalism and entertainment, e-culture, heritage and tourism, and m-content.

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The registration for interested applicants would be open from 11 April to 10 June 2016. Notable individuals from the technology sector of South Asia will assess the applications on the quality of their content, impact of the solution, functionality of the product/service and benefits to people. The winners of the awards will be announced on September 2016. The winners of the BMDIA will get direct nomination to the Indian Manthan Awards and will represent Bangladesh there.

The press conference was moderated by BRAC's senior director Asif Saleh. Explaining the award nomination process he said, 'mobile and internet are bringing groundbreaking changes in the way people are interacting with the world around themselves. These newer digital services are reaching more people than ever and improving the quality of people's lives. BRAC wants to use that momentum and recognise those innovators who are catalysing these changes.'

A number of Bangladeshi initiatives have won this award in the previous years in India, including A2i's e-purjee platform, bKash, Maya.com.bd, British Council's EITA project with BRAC, Amader Kishorganj, Infolady, Amar Desh Amar Gram. As the number of Bangladeshi applicants are rising for the Manthan Awards, BRAC has decided to bring this award in Bangladesh to promote and encourage a positive and working environment in ICT for development in here.

Ovick Alam from WebAble, the digital media partner of this award said, "122 million people in Bangladesh use mobile and 63 million use internet connection. Only 55% of this population is urban. We need to bring a paradigm shift from being urban focused to going country-wide. BRAC Manthan stands for that shift. It encourages people all over the country to bring tech-based solutions for mass people."

Present at the conference were BRAC's senior director Asif Saleh, director of advocacy and technology KAM Morshed, Prothom Alo's associate editor Anisul Hoque, Prothom Alo's development programme coordinator Munir Hasan, DEF's deputy programme manager Ravi Guria and WebAble Digital's co-founder and director Ovick Alam.

Prothom Alo is an associate partner of this initiative and WebAble Digital is the digital media partner of BMDIA 2016 while Channel 24 is supporting this initiative as the TV media partner.



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