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BAU scientists claim to have decoded Hilsa genome sequencing first

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A group of scientists of Bangladesh Agricultural University on Saturday claimed that they were the first to have decoded Hilsa genome sequencing in the world.

They made the claim at a press conference at

the office of BAU journalists' association in the morning.

The press conference comes just a day after some newspapers ran reports about another group of Bangladeshi scientists, including teachers from Dhaka University, decoding Hilsa genome sequencing.

'We decoded genome sequencing first in the world,' said Bangladesh Agricultural University fisheries biology and genetics professor Md Samsul Alam, also the leader of the four-member team decoding genome sequencing, at the press conference.

After the press conference, Shamsul Alam told New Age that the work of decoding genome sequencing was a laborious one for it had to be verified with other scientists to make sure everything was right in the process.

'We can come to press with our findings only after being sure beyond doubt about our findings,' said Shamsul Alam.

He said that he along with three other teachers – poultry science professor Md Bazlur Rahman Mollah, biotechnology professor Md Shahidul Islam and fisheries biology and genetics professor Md Golam Quader Khan – started their work in December 2015.

Their work was included in the globally acclaimed international genome database National Centre for Biotechnology Information on August 25 2017 after being peer reviewed, said Shamsul Alam.

'There is a process scientists must follow before claiming that a breakthrough has been made,' he said, adding that they also presented their work in two international scientific conferences in December 2017 and January 2018.

'After working for two years we were about to make our finding public on September 10 through a conference of Bangladeshi scientists at BAU,' said Shamsul Alam.

Dhaka University biochemistry and molecular biology department professor Haseena Khan admitted that their work was not peer reviewed.

Haseena said that she led a joint team of researchers based in the United States and Dhaka to start the work of genome sequencing in August 2017 and had the work just finished in August 2018.

'We did not go for international recognition considering that it may be difficult for the government to claim its patent once the finding is publicly available,' said Haseena, who was also on the team that decoded Jute genome sequencing.

Hilsa is Bangladesh's national fish.

Hilsa constitutes 12 per cent of total annual fish production and livelihood of about 4 lakh people depends on it.

Bangladesh produces about 60 per cent of the world's Hilsa.

