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## Political and social elites have been working as the driver of the country's economic growth

*Experts said at the BIGD-ESID policy workshop*

The steady growth of Bangladesh has been possible because of a kind of deal prevailing between the political and social elites, speakers said at a workshop in the capital on Thursday. The observation came as speakers discussed how the country maintained a 'steady and reasonably high' growth despite shifts in political regimes and economic policies over decades since its independence in 1971.

organised the policy workshop on 'Politics and Development, Democracy and Growth: Bangladesh and Beyond' at BRAC Centre Inn. The workshop contained three important sessions titled "Understanding the Politics of Economic Growth"; "Understanding the Politics of Social Policy"; and "The Political Settlement in Bangladesh: Past, Present and Future".



Representatives of administration, bureaucrats and politicians joined these elites in expanding their sources to earn more money from and the syndicate continued to grow through discoveries of new resources like new maritime boundary, they said. The experts taking part in the discussion also expressed concern that the 'deal' was not, however, enough to attain inclusive growth. They also appreciated achieving the existing growth trend, despite weaknesses in many of the market-enhancing institutions, because of a reasonably robust form of 'growth-enhancing governance'. But they also stressed the need for holding periodic, fair and contestable elections to satisfy popular aspirations, and for seeking legitimacy.

Taking part in the discussion, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Chairman Professor Rehman Sobhan said: "The term 'ideology' is now a myth. Ideals are used to deliver speeches on the national days. Personal development is stronger than idealism. Whoever the player is now, all are motivated with this."

"The existence of this equilibrium is related to the expansion of sources from where rents are collected," said Centre for Policy Dialogue distinguished fellow Debapriya Bhattacharya. "The question is how long will this equilibrium hold?" asked Debapriya.

Dr. Mirza M Hassan, an adjunct fellow at the BIGD, presented the first session's keynote paper on navigating the labyrinth of the 'deal's' world and politics of economic growth in Bangladesh. He authored the paper along with Selim Raihan, University of Dhaka. 'Ordered deal was maintained

BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) in cooperation with Effective States of Inclusive Development (ESID), University of Manchester jointly

under military dictatorships, dominant party settlements exhibiting mostly centralised rent management, as well as under competitive party settlement in Bangladesh,' read one of the points mentioned in the keynote paper referring Bangladesh as a unique case. 'In economic domain, the elites don't fight. They come together at the end of the day,' said Mirza. As a result, business community has become politically stronger, said the paper. It also mentioned that the country's growth has been a topic of surprise for many given the facts that it has a bad reputation for governance.

Dr. Sohela Nazneen, Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex and Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka; Simeen

Mahmud, Head, Gender Cluster & CGST, BIGD; and Dr. Naomi Hossain, IDS also presented their papers at the workshop. Eminent academics and policy experts including David Hulme, CEO, ESID; Professor Wahiduddin Mahmud, University of Dhaka; Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman, PPRC; Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman, Executive Director, BIGD and Professor Rounaq Jahan of the Centre for Policy Dialogue and Kazi Anis Ahmed, writer and publisher discussed the papers presented at the workshop. Country Representative of The Hunger Project Badiul Alam Majumder, The Daily Star editor Mahfuz Anam, Dhaka University teacher Asif Nazrul, and former caretaker government adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman attended the workshop among others.

## **BIGD's pilot project received the World Bank's South Asia Procurement Innovation Award for 2016-2017**

BIGD, as part of the Public Procurement Reform Project (PPRP, phase 11) has been supporting the Central Procurement Technical Unit (CPTU), IME Division, Ministry of Planning to pilot test a third-party monitoring system (model) of infrastructure projects, involving the beneficiaries/citizens at the Upazila level. BIGD team has been involved in implementing

The theme of the conference was "e-GP in South Asia: Achievements, Opportunities and Challenges". Director General of CPTU Md Faruque Hossain, the current chair of the South Asian Public Procurement Network (SAPPN), represented Bangladesh in the conference.



the project in four Upazilas of Rangpur and Sirajganj for the past 18 months. The essence of the project is to establish greater transparency and accountability in public procurement through citizens' engagement.

This pilot project has received the World Bank's South Asia Procurement Innovation Award for 2016-2017 at the fourth South Asia Regional Public Procurement Conference, hosted by the Sri Lankan Department of Public Finance at Sri Lanka, on February 20-23, 2017.

The SAPPN is a platform of heads of public procurement regulatory bodies in South Asian countries. They exchange ideas and experiences to innovate good practices to improve public procurement management in the region in general and their own country in particular. The SAPPN for the first time declared public procurement award under some categories. The World Bank, Asian Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank were the sponsors of the conference.

## We must focus more on quality than quantity of development works to avoid higher maintenance cost

*said Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal at the 11th PPSC meeting*

"The lion's share of the budgetary allocation is spent for maintenance. We have to reduce wastage and show zero tolerance. We must focus more on quality than quantity of development works to avoid higher maintenance cost," said Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal. He advised to replicate citizens' engagement in public procurement process in at least

development projects, he suggested referring to the objections about projects of the government, the minister said no project plan is approved without feasibility study and much discussion. "First we see whether the project is in conflict with the 7th five year plan or not," he said, adding, needs assessment is of course done for any project. "If we can start this



50 representative upazilas out of the total 491. He also pointed out that effective monitoring through citizens' engagement can reduce project cost and ensure quality. The Planning Minister also called for forming area-wise citizens' committee where community and opinion leaders will be the members to monitor various government projects. He was speaking at the 11th meeting of 'Public-Private Stakeholders Committee' (PPSC) under Public Procurement Reform Project (PPRP, phase II) of the Central Procurement Technical Unit (CPTU) at the NEC conference room in the city on 9 February 2017. BIGD, in association with the World Bank (WB) and Central Procurement Technical Unit (CPTU) of IME Division, Ministry of Planning, organised the programme. At present, the project has been piloted in four Upazilas of Sirajganj and Rangpur districts. As the broad objective of the PPRP-II is to improve performance of the public procurement system, the meeting discussed learning from the national seminar 'Citizen Engagement in Public Procurement' and provided a final update on the field activities.

Mr Kamal said the Prime Minister (PM) has the directive regarding citizens' engagement. There should be a signboard with description of all

practice, this will bring benefit and no harm," he said.

BIGD adjunct fellow Dr. Mirza M Hassan made a presentation on experience of pilot projects in four upazilas. He said citizens' engagement needs to be formalised under a legal framework to avoid unnecessary harassment of any party during the project work. It was also observed during the discussion meeting with engineers that project specification was not followed meticulously during implementation stage. Mr. Hassan proposed that the pilot projects should be scaled up to district level to ensure quality of project implementation and needs assessment.

Chief Procurement Specialist of the World Bank, Dhaka Zafrul Islam said that citizens' engagement was a new concept although it was thought to be a buzz word a few years back. He noted that citizens' engagement in projects can ensure good governance. There are problems at grassroots level while implementing policy-level decisions, he said. It is necessary to know what the field-level people think about projects and awareness should be created among the field-level officers, he added.

Among others, Md. Faruque Hossain, Director General, CPTU; Syed Rashedul Hossen, Deputy Secretary, Finance Division, Ministry of Finance; Md. Mahmudul Hoque, Joint Secretary, IMED; Md. Rois Uddin, Additional Secretary, LGD; Md. Nazrul Islam, Member, Planning Commission; Md. Fazlur Rahman, Director Programme, DPE; Brig. Gen. Md. Parvvez Kabir, Director, CMSD; Munshi Basher Ahmed, Director, Project Planning, PDB; Mohammad Eklas Uddin, Director of Finance, EWU, Abdul Ahad, Director, Finance and Admin, TIB and Engr. S M Khorshed Alam, Vice President, BACI also shared their observations and suggestions at the meeting.

PPSC is largely focusing on the key sectoral ministries and targeting their implementing agencies, including Roads and Highways (RHD), Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), Rural Electrification Board (REB) and Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB). The PPRP-II has four components: 1) furthering policy reform and institutionalizing capacity development, II) strengthening procurement management at sectoral level and Central Procurement Technical Unit (CPTU)/ Implementation Moni-toring and Evaluation Division (IMED), III) introducing e-Government (e-GP) behavioural change communication and social accountability.

## Bangladesh's contribution to knitwear sector calls for action not just words and we must begin to engage to address the rapid change of the industry

*Experts said at a dissemination workshop*

Bangladesh's contribution to knitwear sector calls for action not just words and we must begin to engage to

Secretary and Deputy Executive Project Director SEIP project, Dr. Md. Shanawez Hossain Chief Coordinator



address the rapid change of the industry, experts said at a dissemination workshop held on February 27, 2017 at a hotel in the city. BIGD in partnership with Skills for Employment Investment Programme (SEIP) project organised the workshop to disseminate Need Assessment Report and Outline of Course Curriculum of Executive Development Programme (EDP) under SEIP project and have feedback from entrepreneurs and experts of Knitwear Sector in Bangladesh.

Professor Dr. Syed Saad Andaleeb, Vice Chancellor BRAC University attended the workshop as chief guest where Mr. Abdur Rouf Talukder, Additional Secretary and Executive Project Director, SEIP project was special guest. Among others, Mr. Arastoo Khan, Chairman of Board of Directors of Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited, Mr. Md. Khairul Islam, Joint

of EDP, SEIP; and entrepreneurs and experts from Knitwear sector attended the event.

To accelerate the growth by increasing the productivity of workforce of the priority industry sectors including knitwear sector, the Government of Bangladesh with the help of ADB and SDC is implementing this skills training program. BRAC University is implementing curriculum development part for the knitwear sub-sector. It will ultimately lead to establishing an Executive Development Center to address skills gap for the mid to high level managers as well as new entrants in knitwear sector.

In his speech Professor Dr. Syed Saad Andaleeb said, "It is a perfect platform for industry and academic linkage where BRAC University has accommodated

SEIP for Knitwear industry development. The course will reduce the dependence on foreign resources yet will find ways to better collaborate in the fields of research and development and capitalize the scope of lifelong learning.” He suggested that there should be a benchmark and monitoring of the training outcome for the feasibility of such training to integrate more such programs. In future there should be research documents for the next batch of activities. This training programme should focus on SMART goal with innovation and course delivery engaging the participants with critical thinking and problem solving discussions, he added. He also suggested different classroom management techniques like, flip class rooms, group projects, Q/A sessions to make the training interactive.

Mr. Arosto Khan, who was one of the brains behind the idea of EDP said, “My engagement with this project is more of passion. As you are all aware that we are going through a demographic dividend and a large number of young men and women are entering into the industry market. So we have to prepare them. Again China is relocating a lot of factories away from China as the cost of labor in China is going up and we have to prepare our market for that. So these factors put an impact to take decision regarding the ADB funded EDP.”

Narrating background of the EDP Project, Dr. Abdur Rouf Talukder, Executive Project Director of SEIP and the Additional Secretary, Finance Ministry said that there was enormous skill gap at mid and higher level positions, namely supervisor; mid and top level managers in certain industrial sector. Against this backdrop, the SEIP project of Finance Division under Ministry of Finance would like to work with leading

universities of the country to establish Executive Development Centre (EDC) to conduct nine-month training programme to develop mid and higher level managers. Government will support the programme up to 2024. He also mentioned that the concept of EDC used here will be an entity that will support at developing world class business executive and entrepreneurs. He briefly narrated the scope of the EDC, its beneficiaries, its funding modality and possible implementing strategy.

In his welcome speech, Dr. Shanawez Hossain, Research Fellow of BIGD and Chief Coordinator of EDP, SEIP said, “The ‘Government-industry-university’ linkage established under this project is something completely new in Bangladesh. However, it is not new in many countries of the world where companies and universities work in tandem to push the frontiers of knowledge; and thus they become a powerful engine for innovation and economic growth. Silicon Valley, Microsoft-Cisco-Intel and University of Melbourne collaboration; and BP’s Energy Biosciences Institute in the University of California, Berkeley are examples of such collaborations.”

Later Mr. Md. Khairul Islam, Deputy Executive Project Director, SEIP made brief presentation on EDP while Chief Coordinator of EDP, SEIP Dr. Shanawez Hossain presented the Training Need Assessment findings. Ms. Mahreen Mamoon, Coordinator of EDP, SEIP presented tentative curriculum of courses to be offered under this program while EDP-SEIP coordinators Mr. Sirajul Islam and Ms. Jannatun Naim facilitated the workshop. Representatives from several knitwear industries attended the workshop and provided their valuable suggestions and guidelines to make the EDP successful.

## Bangladesh's progress offers lessons for achieving sustainable development globally



*Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman, Executive Director, BIGD (left) and Melissa Leach, Director, IDS are signing an MoU*

Bangladesh’s remarkable progress over the last 40 years in reducing poverty and improving lives can offer valuable lessons for achieving inclusive and sustainable development globally, said Dr. Mushtaque Chowdhury, Vice-Chair of BRAC, at an event in the Palace of Westminster hosted by the UK’s All Party Parliamentary Group for Bangladesh and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex.

Dr. Chowdhury highlighted the vital contribution that the partnership between Bangladesh and the UK has made to Bangladesh graduating to lower middle-income status, reducing poverty, improving health services and education provision and modernising agriculture. Bangladesh has overtaken India in terms of human development progress, he added. He also said that the collaboration between Bangladesh and the UK has helped to increase our understanding of how to break the cycle of extreme poverty. This learning around what works could make a significant contribution to the reduction of poverty in all of its forms globally.

Meanwhile, the IDS has signed a series of new MoUs with Bangladeshi partners including BRAC, James P Grant School of Public Health (JPGSH) and the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD). The MoUs were signed as part of a wider series of events taking place at IDS and in the UK parliament, looking at the rapid progress of development in Bangladesh over the last 40 years. These MoUs provide a productive and mutually beneficial framework for future collaborations that will contribute to global efforts to reduce poverty and inequality, and will harness the organisations' complementary expertise across research, learning, development programming and practice.

Dr. Chowdhury said, "From Robert Chambers helping

to inform BRAC's participatory approach to development in the 1990s, to our founder Sir Fazle Hasan sitting on the IDS board – the connections between BRAC and IDS are longstanding and highly valued. I am delighted to be signing this agreement today which will strengthen and evolve these collaborations so both organisations can continue to work together to achieve progressive social change."

Melissa Leach, Director, IDS said over the last four decades IDS has worked alongside colleagues in Bangladesh to tackle some of the world's most pressing challenges and signing these agreements represents an important opportunity to recognise and reaffirm these vital partnerships. "For it is only through global cooperation and collaboration that we can realise our shared visions of a fairer, safer and more sustainable world," she said.

Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman, Executive Director, BIGD, said, "These research partnerships will contribute both to the strategic direction of each of the organisations, as well as continue to support the type of informed, evidence-based policy making that has helped achieve the remarkable gains in social development in Bangladesh over the last 40 years". Together IDS, BRAC, JPGSH and BIGD will seek to identify future opportunities that foster mutual learning and cooperation around research and policy engagement activities.

## BIGD Research Fellow attended the NGAF Seminar

Dr. Shanawez Hossain, Research Fellow of BIGD attended a seminar on National Governance Assessment Framework (NGAF) with the Members of Parliament (MPs), held on February 14, 2017, at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). The seminar was arranged by Governance Innovation Unit (GIU), PMO and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Bangladesh. Consultants from UNDP presented a draft governance assessment framework in the seminar, where 10 MPs shared their valuable opinions. The session was chaired by Dr. Gowher Rizvi, Advisor to the Prime Minister, whilst Md. Abdul Halim, Director General of GIU, and Sudipto Mukerjee, Country Director of UNDP also attended the event.



## Researchers' other activities

- Simeen Mahmud, Head, Gender Cluster & CGST and Maheen Sultan, Visiting Fellow attended the workshop on "Bangladesh in focus: What can we learn about sustainable and inclusive development?", held on 27-28 February, 2017, organized by Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex.
- Sahida Islam Khondaker, Nuzhat Sharmeen, Sufia Khatun and Sanjida Parvin, Research Associates of BIGD, attended the training on MAXQDA software, organized by ODI and JPGSPH under the GAGE project.
- Mohammed Misbah Uddin, Research Associate presented a proposal on "Implementing tobacco control law in Bangladesh: Challenges and way forward" at the Proposal Review Workshop for Tobacco Control Research Grant Program 2017 on February 25-26, 2017 at Bangladesh Center for Communication Programs (BCCP)
- Kaneta Zillur, Research Associate, attended a seminar titled Dhaka's Economic Future: Opportunities and Challenges organized by Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) and Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) held on February 23, 2017 at DCCI.

## Executive Director's Activities

BIGD Executive Director Dr. Sultan Hafeez Rahman had several meetings in February 2017 with a number of distinguished personalities such as prominent academics, policy makers and researchers regarding the research collaborations and other relevant issues of BIGD.

Dr. Rahman had meetings with Mohammad Mejbahuddin Secretary, Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance, regarding research and academic programme, Isabel Bucknall and Deepa Solanki, Managers at Adam Smith International - Public Financial Management, regarding possible

partnership; Brian D. Hanley, Regional Director for Asia Programmes of Internews, regarding a project of media monitoring, Franziska Korn, Resident Representative of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung - Bangladesh Office, regarding the ongoing project and board meeting and Ms. Sylvia Borren, BRAC board member from the Netherlands & former Director of Green Peace.

Dr. Rahman also attended Economic Research Division's (ERD) high-level consultation meeting on "National Policy on Development Cooperation" and many other lectures, seminars and conferences.



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