

BIISS

Country Lecture Series

Part- 2



Bangladesh Institute of International & Strategic Studies (BIISS)

BIISS

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Edited by
Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc



Bangladesh Institute of International & Strategic Studies (BIISS)



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Editorial

This book is a collection of Country Lectures which were held from 2014 to 2017 organised by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS). It is a part of BISS efforts to explore the potentials and avenues to intensify Bangladesh's relations with several countries and to provide a platform to discuss on diversified national and global issues.

The lecture on **Brazilian Foreign Policy and Brazil-Bangladesh Relations** was held on 03 August 2014 at BISS auditorium. It was delivered by H. E. Ms. Wanja Campos da Nóbrega, Ambassador of Brazil to Bangladesh. She talked about Brazil's foreign policy in the contemporary world and highlighted various aspects of Brazil-Bangladesh relations. Brazil, a beautiful country of South America is mainly famous for its artistic football. There are thousands of Bangladeshi football fans supporting Brazilian football team, as seen during the football World Cup. Brazil is the largest country of South America, which received global attention due to its economic progress and growing international influence in recent years. Natural resources and agricultural products provided Brazil with strong economic advantage and stable foundation for continued growth. In addition to agriculture, the country's industrialisation is expanding remarkably. In Bangladesh–Brazil relations, there are many convergence of interests on different global issues. Particularly, on issues like global climate and trade negotiation. Brazil opened its mission in Dhaka in 2009 and Bangladesh opened its mission in Brazil in 2012. Both countries are working to increase bilateral trade and investment. Cooperation in agriculture sector, technological support and facilitation of dairy firms are also on the agenda. The countries are sorting out potential areas of cooperation in education and cultural sectors. Moreover, cooperation in areas of climate change adaptation, food security, infrastructure building can open a new era of bilateral relations between the countries, which would bring mutual benefits for both countries.

On 21 October 2014, the lecture on **Japan-Bangladesh Relations: Comprehensive Partnership** was held. It was delivered by H. E. Mr. Shiro Sadoshima, Ambassador of Japan to Bangladesh. The visits of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to Japan and her counterpart the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Bangladesh have added further momentum to the existing bilateral relations and brought mutual benefits for the people of the two great nations. Japan, as a credible friend and development partner, has always been generous in providing assistance to Bangladesh. Bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Japan is flourishing. Over the years, Japanese investment and numbers of Japanese companies are growing in Bangladesh. As a littoral of the Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh is now more significant both economically and strategically. This is acknowledged by the Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt, i.e., BIG-B initiative proposed by Japan. Therefore, a comprehensive economic partnership between Bangladesh and Japan is imperative. Also, more people-to-people contact, exchange and joint collaboration among academic institutions of the two countries are needed for deepening of bilateral relations.

The lecture on **Sweden, Europe and Asia** was held on 27 April 2015. It was delivered by H. E. Mr. Johan Frisell, Ambassador of Sweden to Bangladesh. Swedish development cooperation with Bangladesh has exceeded US\$ 1.7 billion. Sweden has pledged to provide Bangladesh with 1.6 billion Swedish Krona (US\$ 180 Million) for the development assistance purpose for the next seven years. This is a part of Sweden's development strategy for Bangladesh for 2014-2020. The cooperation emphasises on health, inclusive economic growth,

skill development, human rights and good governance. Besides, primary education, water and sanitation, climate change adaptation and disaster risk management are significant areas of cooperation. There are more than 50 Swedish or Swedish affiliated companies in Bangladesh either by themselves or by their agents; total trade including export and import between Bangladesh and Sweden amounts over US\$ 500 million. There is huge potential for attracting Swedish investment in sectors like renewable energy, paper pulp, jute, leather-products, textile and ready-made garments. Swedish government provides significant amounts of scholarships to Bangladeshi students. Thus, Sweden has been a trustworthy friend of Bangladesh and the lecture delivered by H. E. Mr. Johan Frisell was to further enhance bilateral relations and cooperation between the two friendly nations.

The lecture, titled **Recent Developments in Bangladesh-India Bilateral Relations and Its Prospects** was held on 14 September 2015 and was delivered by H. E. Mr. Pankaj Saran, High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh. Bilateral relations between Bangladesh and India witnessed a significant upswing over the past decade. During the period, the two countries signed a number of treaties that encouraged trade and economic cooperation, provided easier connectivity resulting in more people-to-people contact and addressed a number of security issues. During the visit of the Indian Prime Minister to Bangladesh in June 2015, both countries signed 22 agreements. India proposed a US\$ 02 billion line of credit to Bangladesh and pledged US\$ 05 billion worth of investments. As per the agreements, India is also going to invest in setting up of 3000 MW LNG based power plant and 1600 MW coal fired power plant. On the other hand, both countries also increased their trade from US\$ 03 billion to over US\$ 05 billion in the last five years. In 2015, they signed the very important Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) with execution from 31 July 2015. It was termed as a new chapter in Bangladesh-India bilateral relations and certainly paved the way to resolve other longstanding issues between the two friendly countries.

The lecture **Booming Chinese Economy: Prospects for Bangladesh** was held on 10 October 2015. It was delivered by H. E. Mr. Ma Mingqiang, Ambassador of China to Bangladesh. China is becoming an increasingly active and important player in major global issues. Bangladesh-China relations are being transformed from cooperation to partnership. China has extended substantial grants and loans to Bangladesh, provides technical and financial assistance to many projects of significance for the Bangladesh economy. Its extensive support to Bangladesh in building and maintaining defence capabilities is noted with particular appreciation in the country. It is the largest trading partner of Bangladesh. FDI from China has been growing noticeably. There are huge scopes for increasing trade and realising investment opportunities between the two countries. Connectivity is a potential area of further cooperation, where the existing BCIM-EC initiative and China's mega concept of "One Belt One Road" are relevant. Other potential areas of cooperation include energy resources, water resources, maritime affairs, capacity building of Bangladesh's rivers and sea ports, infrastructure investment, education, human resources development, science and technology, etc.

The lecture, titled **Bangladesh-EU Relations: A Multifaceted Partnership** was held on 06 October 2016. It was delivered by H. E. Mr. Pierre Mayaudon, Head of Delegation, European Union Delegation to Bangladesh. Bangladesh-EU relations can be traced back to 1973, when Bangladesh established formal diplomatic relations with the newly enlarged European Community. Since then, cooperation between these two evolved over the years and reached a new level of partnership under the third generation EU-Bangladesh Co-operation Agreement in 2001, where the spectrum of co-operation was broadened to include a wide array of spheres, e.g., support for sustainable economic and social development, aid for trade, governance, environment, science and technology, information, culture and communication, etc. Both Bangladesh and the EU are working closely to increase economic and trade cooperation between them. In case of economic cooperation, the EU has shown considerable preference for Bangladesh. Under EU's Generalised

System of Preference (GSP), namely the Everything but Arms (EBA), products originating in Bangladesh now enjoy duty and quota-free access to the EU market. The EU is the single largest business partner of Bangladesh, accounting for around 24 per cent of Bangladesh's total trade in 2015. The EU is one of the most important destinations of exports from Bangladesh. EU member states as a whole are currently the largest development partner of Bangladesh.

The lecture, titled **France: Its challenges and Foreign Policy** was held on 13 April 2017 at BISS auditorium. It was delivered by H. E. Mrs. Sophie Aubert, Ambassador of France to Bangladesh. The Ambassador talked about various challenges those France is experiencing both in the domestic and foreign policy issues. France is a very old country with a complex history. One of the main characteristics of France is its universal dimension. The French language remains widely used in world diplomacy. French intellectuals contributed greatly to the progression and the evolution of the ideals in the world. It is the historic cradle of secularism- '*Laïcité*'. Its territory is more than three times of Bangladesh and the population is three times less that of Bangladesh. Its economic partners are mainly West European countries, the US and China. There are some priority issues of France's foreign policy. France would need to address the instability and insecurity to protect its territory and citizens all over the world. The country must address the challenge of economic growth and stabilisation by sorting out a solution for avoiding the crisis like that of 2008. The third priority is to support democracy and democratic transition all over the world. Finally, France is facing some challenges such as the European challenge, the *Jihadist* challenge and the cyberspace challenge.

Improving bilateral relations with near and distant neighbours, being aware of global crucial issues and assessing emerging relations with South Asia are cornerstones of Bangladesh's foreign policy. Quite often these work as a source of strength. The lectures were thought-provoking and insightful. Intuitive speeches and open discussions enriched the lectures. This book containing the speeches of the respective countries' ambassadors and high commissioners. It will certainly help to understand the challenges of bilateral relations of Bangladesh and various global and regional issues better. I want to extend heartfelt thanks to the ambassadors and high commissioners of the respective countries for their insightful and erudite speeches and especially for managing time out of their busy schedule to deliver lectures at BISS.

My sincere gratitude extends to Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad, Chairman, Board of Governors of the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) for moderating the lectures and contributing by his thought provoking interventions.

I also express my sincere gratitude to the coordinators and their teams who worked hard in organising the lectures in different times.

Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc

Director General

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS)

Country Lecture on

Brazilian Foreign Policy and Brazil-Bangladesh Relations



Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) organised its 9th Country Lecture on 03 August 2014 at the Institute's auditorium. The lecture was delivered by H. E. Ms. Wanja Campos da Nóbrega, Ambassador of Brazil to Bangladesh. She talked about Brazil's foreign policy in the contemporary world and highlighted various aspects of Brazil-Bangladesh relations. Major General S M Shafiuddin Ahmed, ndu, psc, Director General of BISS, delivered the opening address. Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad, Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS chaired the session and summed up with concluding speech.



Biography of

H. E. Ms. Wanja Campos da Nóbrega
Ambassador, Embassy of Brazil in Bangladesh

H. E. Ms. Wanja Campos da Nóbrega graduated in International Relations at the University of Brasília (1981) and in Diplomatic Relations at the Diplomatic Academy of Brazil (The Rio Branco Institute - IRBr), in 1984). She also studied Diplomatic Relations and International Negotiations in Canberra, Australia in 1986, under the foreign exchange diplomatic programme. In 2006, she defended a thesis titled “The United Nations Organization and Trade Opportunities” under the Higher Studies Course of the Brazilian Diplomatic Academy. She has been a career diplomat at the Brazilian Foreign Affairs Service for more than 25 years. During her career, she served in many different Brazilian Embassies, as follows: Washington D.C., USA (Embassy), 1997-2001; Rome, Italy (Consulate), 1994; Algiers, Algeria (Embassy), 1993-1994; Paris, France (Consulate), 1990-1992; Paramaribo, Suriname (Embassy), 1989-1990; Canberra, Australia (Embassy), 1988 and La Paz, Bolivia (Embassy), 1986.

From 2006 to April 2012, she was the Deputy Consul General of Brazil in Toronto and the Trade Commissioner of Brazil to Canada. In 2012, she was designated as Ambassador of Brazil to Bangladesh.



Address of Welcome

**Major General S M Shafiuddin Ahmed, ndu, psc,
Director General, BISS**

In his opening address, Major General S M Shafiuddin Ahmed, ndu, psc, noted that the purpose of the Country Lecture is to enhance the understanding about specific countries with whom Bangladesh has inescapable bilateral relations and to explore scopes to strengthen mutual relations in all possible areas. He said that Brazil, a beautiful country of South America is mainly known for its artistic football. There are thousands of Bangladeshi football fans supporting Brazilian football team, as seen during the recent World football Cup. He added that hundreds of Brazilian flags are flying in Bangladesh in support of this South American team. Talking about Brazil's economic status, he mentioned that Brazil, the largest country of South America, received global attention due to its economic progress and international influence in recent years. In the past decade, the country drew global attention due to its economic progress and international influence. It also became one of the world's fastest growing economies. At present, it is the largest economy of South America and the seventh largest economy of the world with US\$ 2.2 trillion GDP in 2013. He elaborated that the country experienced rapid economic growth driven by boom in international demand for Brazilian commodities such as meat, sugar, soybean, iron ore and crude oil. He added that natural resources and agricultural products gave Brazil strong economic advantage and stable foundation for continued growth.

In addition to agriculture, he mentioned that, Brazil's industrialisation is expanding remarkably. Economists attribute Brazil's growth to sound economic management, which has reduced inflation, allocated foreign investment and stabilised currency. The country has strides in reducing poverty and growing middle class. Using the World Bank data, he mentioned the country's poverty had fallen markedly from 21 per cent of the population in 2003 to 11 per cent in 2009. Extreme poverty also dropped dramatically, from 10 per cent in 2004 to 2.2 per cent in 2009. Between 2001 and 2009, the income growth rate of the poorest 10 per cent of the population was 7 per cent per year, while that of the richest 10 per cent was 1.7 per cent. According to his opinion, this helped to decrease income inequality, which is considered as an important success of Brazil's economic management.

General Ahmed stated that Brazil's strong economic positions and rich natural resources allowed the country to define and cement a new global leadership role. Together with Russia, India, China and South Africa, Brazil is part of the BRICS group of leading emerging economies with significant influence on regional and global affairs. At the regional level, he said, the country is playing a leadership role in institutions like the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

The Director General of BISS also talked about Brazil's engagement in the international arena in which the country aspires to join the ranks of major powers. When it comes to the global diplomacy, Brazil actively participates at the same forums as the major powers with the intention of shaping the rules for the coming world order. He opined that the country took advantage of its rise during the past decade to campaign for permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and played a major role in UN peacekeeping operations. He added that it is also a member of G-20 and took a leadership role in WTO negotiations, where it led a major group of developing nations that opposed European and US proposals on global trade. In global climate change negotiations and public health, as he also mentioned, Brazil established itself as a leading voice. In November 2013, it led the G-77 at global climate change negotiations in Warsaw, Poland, proposing a methodology for assessing historical responsibilities for greenhouse gas emission. The country is also an influential leader in the process of global south-south cooperation.

Discussing Bangladesh–Brazil relations, General Ahmed viewed that there are many convergences of interests between Bangladesh and Brazil regarding global issues. Particularly, on the issues like global climate and trade negotiations, both countries had many common interests. However, in recent years, both countries realised the need to expand bilateral cooperation to explore untapped potentials. In this respect, Brazil opened its mission in Dhaka in 2009 and Bangladesh opened its mission in Brazil in 2012. He added that both countries agreed to increase bilateral trade and investment. Cooperation in agriculture sector, technological support and facilitation of dairy firms are also on the agenda. The countries are also sorting out potential areas of cooperation in education and cultural sectors. He hoped cooperation in areas of climate change adaptation, food security and infrastructure building will open a new era of bilateral relations between the countries.



Lecture by the Ambassador

H. E. Ms. Wanja Campos da Nóbrega

Her Excellency Ms. Wanja Campos da Nóbrega, Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil to Bangladesh, delivered a lecture at the BISS auditorium on 03 August 2014. The title of her lecture was on “Brazilian Foreign Policy and Brazil-Bangladesh Relations”. She expressed her pleasure and gratitude for Bangladeshi fans’ supporting towards the Brazilian national football team.

Her Excellency Nóbrega’s lecture was divided into three parts. The first part discussed Brazil’s achievements and current situations. The second part addressed the changes experienced by the world, while the third described views Bangladesh–Brazil relations.

Ambassador Nóbrega said that the first change in Brazil took place in the 1990s; after twenty years of authoritarian rule (1964-84), Brazil was plagued by deep financial crisis, unemployment rate and inflation soared, the impacts of which originated the term “Lost Decade: for most countries in South America and other developing regions of the globe”. These could be attributed to the rise in oil prices and the exponential growth of interests ultimately leading to rising external debts for many of these countries. Brazil undertook many initiatives to come out of high inflation. Several plans were put into action and currencies were changed consecutively. But they all proved ineffective. Then the country undertook a series of economic reforms called the *Plano Real* (Real Plan) that helped to stabilise the economy and control price hikes. The *Plano Real* used a neoclassical, monetarist approach and set macroeconomic goals as pursued by the state itself to control inflation, interest, currency exchange rates, external reserves regardless of which government was in office. Brazil continues to follow these policies till today. Nevertheless, in 2000, Brazilian people came to know these policies were not sufficient to stabilise the country’s economic structure. In order to achieve higher living standards, they would need to understand development as a much broader concept than economic growth alone. Those decades could be argued as dedicated for addressing social development issues. For example, conditional income transfer programmes like *Fome Zero* (Zero Hunger) and *Bolsa Família* (Family Allowance) lifted 40 million Brazilians out of poverty. For receiving the family allowance benefit, a family must guarantee that their children were attending school, going to public hospitals for immunisation, vaccination and regular checkups. Besides, expecting mothers must attend public clinics for assuring prenatal examinations. These programmes did help improve living standards and were complemented by other programmes as well like the *Luz Para Todos* (Light for All) which was designed to provide electricity to the remotest parts of Brazil and the latest *Minha Casa-Minha Vida* (My House-My Life). These enterprises of the 2000s gave rise to a huge domestic market with medium to high purchasing power and consumption, which in turn helped the Brazilian economy become more resilient to international crises, e.g., the global economic slump of 2008.

What is more, these programmes helped Brazil to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The country successfully reduced extreme poverty seven years earlier than the deadline with a massive margin. Here Ambassador Nóbrega said that in the 1990s, 25 per cent Brazilians lived in extreme poverty which came down to 5 per cent in 2008 and 3.5 per cent in 2012 respectively.

The progress Brazil achieved in education is also remarkable. About 97.7 per cent Brazilian children aged between 7 to 14 attend school. Literacy among young people (15-24 years of age) reached 98.7 per cent. In the 1990s, maternal mortality was 53 in per 1000 children born. This has dropped to just 17 in 2012. Infant mortality also decreased from 143 to 69 at the same period. Similar progress was made in prenatal consultations for would-be mothers, caring of HIV and other patients, access to fresh water, public sanitation systems and many other areas. Yet the present decade brought in many challenges for Brazilian policymakers, think tanks and others. Brazilian people are now more empowered, less vulnerable to economic shocks, whether internal or external and believed in their country's potentials. The society is organising itself, participating in activities of pressure groups and social movements while constantly redefining itself and its aspirations. The government has also been responsive to these claims. The country is now working to build its infrastructure for gaining global economic competitiveness and foster even further the development of a rich domestic market. Moreover, to prepare for mega events like the FIFA World Football Cup 2014 (recently concluded) and the 2016 Olympic Games, Brazil is developing better communication systems and investing in the tourism industry. These schemes are intended towards improving conditions for Brazilians.

To eradicate corruption, the Brazilian Federal Police, the General Prosecutor's office and other law enforcing bodies are conducting anti-corruption operations on wider scales. These institutions increased from 28 in 2003 to 290 in 2012. That year, around 1,700 public service officials were arrested and prosecuted for corruption, a considerable rise from 210 (corrupt officers) in 2003. Brazil also approved the *Lei da Ficha Limpa* (Clean Record Bill) which would prevent political candidates earlier prosecuted, from running to any political mandate. Ambassador Nóbrega informed about five Brazilian documents that had been approved and issued. These are the National Education Plan, which constrained the government to invest at least 10 per cent of Brazil's GDP in the education sector, i.e., primary, secondary and superior education systems. The second was the Internet Civil Code, which would ensure responsible freedom for internet users while prevent espionage on them and breach their privacy either by companies or government agencies. The Social Participation Plan would establish councils in all cities that would debate and provide nonbinding advice for the federal government of Brazil. The Nutritional Guide for the Brazilian Population would establish guidelines for food security and nutritional health. Finally, the *Programa Mais Médicos* (More Doctors Program) aimed at strengthening Brazil's health service system by bringing foreign doctors and reducing the deficit of health professionals.

Ambassador Nóbrega said that when these changes were occurring in Brazil, the international system was rearranging itself. She talked about four major changes from the 1990s onwards, in addition, remembering the fact that the 70th anniversary of the foundation of the United Nations would be celebrated in 2015. The changes include different issues: a) the end of the East-West political rivalry, i.e., the end of the Cold War and global rearrangement of the political distribution of power; b) the rise of non-state and asymmetric threats to global security. Human rights crises, environmental catastrophes, terrorism and poverty challenges which could be said to have reached the peak in 2001; c) the diversification of economic guidelines and the economic thought after the 2008 global economic crisis and the rise of new economic powers; d) the redistribution of power that implied loss for some countries and gain for

others which could take the first BRICS Summit in 2009 as its symbol. It would not be possible to consider unilateral actions as legitimate; the world must recognise new global and regional powers especially when it comes to collective security. She said that it is urgent to restructure international forums such as the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Here, she informed the audience that more than half of the countries of the world, backed Brazil's bid for a permanent seat at the UNSC. The recognition for the country's representation, legitimacy, efficiency and transparency when dealing with global issues would not halt on the UNSC though, and had been attested as seen in the Brazilian leadership of the MINUSTAH (United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti), leadership in trade and agriculture discussions, environmental forums and many more. These qualities garnered substantial support for Brazil's stance in other global entities. The country expanded its basis of financial consensus to the World Trade Organization (WTO); another Brazilian citizen, a specialist on agriculture and anti-hunger activities had been elected to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).



The Ambassador opined that current global issues should be assessed multilaterally. The year 2001 made this need more explicit. The invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and their aftermath, which gave rise to deeper instability and growing extremism would prove and help understand the necessity of concerted and group actions. She opined that important questions should not be addressed in irresponsible manners. Here she talked about the regulation or deregulation of the global financial system. For years, some countries had lobbied for the deregulation of other nations' financial frameworks, including those who did not have sufficient power to provide minimal, healthy control over the movement of capitals. The lobbyists would say the free flow of capitals would help balance economies, foster development and the funding would go where it was really necessary. Nevertheless, the invisible hand did nothing more than destroying the savings of the poor, the deepening wealth concentration, inequality and rising unemployment.

The countries who suffered less from the 2008 global economic slump, were able to do so because they could resist the pressures for deregulation. These were mainly Asian and South American countries who learnt their lessons from the 1997, 1998 and 2001 economic crises. Also, according to her, the most illustrative fact was, at the first BRICS Leaders Summit in 2009 where Brazil, Russia, India and China (South Africa joined later on), undertook major steps for proving these important countries could work together towards the democratisation of power in the global system. The international presence of BRICS nations

helped to dilute the influence of traditional global players. These nations also made their presence felt in global economic and political arenas. China in the present decade had become the biggest trade partner of Brazil, surpassing 40 years of American trade leadership. A truly global player, China's presence can be felt worldwide. India, in addition, is stepping up initiatives to secure a leadership role towards assuring greater economic growth, human development and fighting poverty. Russia regained its position in world affairs overcoming the collapse of the former USSR; it displayed leadership both at regional and international levels.

The 6th BRICS Summit took place in Brazil in July 2014. It resulted in the creation of an international bank to address development issues. These changes showed another world was possible, a world without unilateralism, poverty and hunger, terrorism and extremism, but with peace and tolerance, in favour of civil and individual liberties, full development of human abilities by means of sustainable economic and social development.

Referring to all these, Ambassador Nóbrega said that this was how Brazil saw Bangladesh and the reasons they recognised the independence of Bangladesh and went on to establish diplomatic relations with the newly independent nation within a year of the country came into being. Brazil-Bangladesh relations existed since then. She added that after forty years of independence, Bangladesh had been successful to stabilise its economy, fight poverty, advance economic activities including exports and widen a domestic market that is now more resilient to external shocks. Just like Brazil, Bangladesh also achieved most of the MDG goals earlier than the deadline. She congratulated Bangladesh for empowering women, assuring democratic access to health and education and improvement of living conditions. Bangladesh is a friend and partner to Brazil not only in trade but also in many other areas and issues. In her opinion, the bilateral trade was improving with a growth amount of 18 times since 2002 but yet to reach full potential, albeit growing gradually; in 2013, the trade figure was US\$ 1.2 billion. The two countries agreed on many grounds such as: promotion and protection of human rights, punishing activities that harmed the innocent, assuring economic growth as a tool for human development, the importance of protecting the environment, climate change issues, agriculture and food security etc. She said that focus on peace building could really foster a country's development, fight corruption and have a more transparent and fair society. Brazil shared its own experience in social programmes and cooperated with Bangladesh as much as it could.

H. E. Nóbrega termed Bangladesh as an example of a secular state with tolerant population in South Asia and in the world as well. Brazil recognised Bangladesh's actions and contributions towards regional peace and stability as well as focus on development. The two countries' common stances as well as close interactions on many important issues like the UN General Assembly, World Trade Organisation and UN Peace Corps etc. resulted in their increasing bilateral ties. She informed that Brazil had been reopening diplomatic missions in many countries worldwide, including in Bangladesh and she is the second Brazilian Ambassador to Bangladesh; on the other hand, Bangladesh also reopened diplomatic missions in Brazil in 2012 and appointed its second ambassador there as well. Ambassador Nóbrega reiterated her gratitude, saying Brazil-Bangladesh ties had been enhanced by the unwavering support of Bangladeshi fans for Brazil's national football team. Yet, bilateral relations have been more than sports. She concluded by expressing her hope that in the coming days, Brazil-Bangladesh relations would continue to grow.

Open Discussion

Following the speech, a lively and vibrant open discussion took place. Distinguished scholars, members of the academia, representatives of multi-disciplinary professional bodies, representatives from foreign missions, government and non-government agencies, policy makers and members of the media actively participated in the open discussion.

Mohammad Fazlul Haque, Chairman and CEO, Delta Youth and Social Welfare Council of Bangladesh, said that Brazil is steadily becoming an economic power in the world. How the



country is making its progress can truly be inspiring for Bangladesh. Bangladesh and Brazil can cooperate in the areas of health, HIV/AIDS, sanitation and assuring access to pure drinking water.

Dr. Mahfuz Kabir, Senior Research Fellow, BISS said that the case of the Brazilian model of participatory budgeting has been a huge success all over the world. This



concept originated during the administration of Brazil's former President Lula de Silva, in Porto Alegre. Brazil is going through a kind of economic crisis; about US\$ 20 billion would be spent on financial sectors. Even though there have been renewed interest and changing equations in the global financial order with the founding of the BRICS Bank, what would be Brazil's strategy to deal with problems like stagflation, huge inflation and growing unemployment etc?

Ambassador Muhammad Zamir, Chairman, Renewable Energy Commission, Bangladesh



remembered his first visit to Brazil in 1992, when he went to attend the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) also known as the Rio Summit or Earth Summit. He was among the five who helped to draft the Agenda 21. One of the issues that was discussed at that meeting was the growth of renewable energy. He asked Ambassador Nóbrega that since the discovery of energy potentials, in terms of hydrocarbons in Brazil, not

sufficient attention was being paid to renewable energy. Many are looking forward to Brazil as a leader in areas like wind energy, also in the contexts of biogas and bio-fuel. In biogas and bio-fuel, there has been notable development in central and eastern Brazil, but not in the western part of the country. Why was not Brazil emphasising on wind energy?

Air Vice Marshal M Sanaul Huq, gup, ndc, psc, GD (P), Bangladesh Air Force and Senior Directing Staff (Air), NDC informed that he was in Brazil for about one and a half years from 1983-85 and also flew with the Brazilian Air Force. He witnessed the first Bangladesh embassy in Brazil and



had been there as well. Relations were much better in those days but with time, lost momentum. Now relations have regained that momentum gradually. Bangladesh's embassy in Brazil is situated in the capital Brasilia. But the heart of Brazil is in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. Therefore, consulates in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo will be needed. Bangladesh and Brazil had very good military relations in the past: here he mentioned his own example when he went to obtain flight training in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. Very recently, relations

started to grow again, e.g., Bangladeshi Armed Forces officers were being sent to staff colleges in Brazil. However, there are ample opportunity for more exchanges and interactions between the two countries. There is significant scope for greater cooperation in civilian aviation. The renowned Embraer of Brazil is the third largest commercial aircraft producer in the world. He drew attention to the fact that light and medium commercial aircrafts manufactured by Brazil are very successful. Novo Air of Bangladesh brought aircrafts from them. Recently, Bangladesh had two or three aircrafts coming from Embraer for Novo Air. But more could be done to really expand cooperation in this sector as well. He then said that lunch in schools, the HIV programmes were in fact, Brazilian programmes adopted by the UN and were doing wonderful work in Bangladesh. He thanked Ambassador Nóbrega and conveyed his appreciation to the Brazilian government through her for initiating these noble programmes being run in many parts of the world by the UN.

Colonel (retd.) Emdad Uddin said that Brazil is a vast country occupying three-fifth of the South American continent. What were the main policies the country adopted for alleviation of poverty and hunger? Did Ambassador Nóbrega observe Brazilian flags flying all over Bangladesh and realise there were millions of fans of the Brazilian team in Bangladesh including the honourable Prime Minister and the Chairman of BIIS?



Mr. Nurul Islam Hasib, Correspondent, *BDNews24*,

wanted to know if Brazil can provide assistance for developing Bangladeshi football.

Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad, Chairman, BIISS said that Brazil is home to the Amazon River and rainforest. For decades, the rainforest had been severely exploited. How was Brazil dealing with that problem?





Response by the Ambassador

Ambassador Nóbrega thanked **Mohammad Fazlul Haque** for his comments, especially for mentioning the HIV programme issue as Brazil remains an example of reference worldwide for its success in that initiative.

To **Dr. Mahfuz Kabir**, Ambassador Nóbrega said that Brazilian domestic market of 20 million people, a substantial number of middle class people, a strong banking system proved important forces behind keeping the country largely out of economic crises.

To **Ambassador Muhammad Zamir**, she said that the programme for developing renewable and alternative energies is one of the dearest in Brazil. In 1970s, Brazil was totally dependent on importing oil from abroad. The price had skyrocketed on global market suffocating all developing nations. Brazil then began developing alternatives to continue its economic growth. The country is very lucky to have an institution called the Brazilian Enterprise for Agricultural Research (EMBRAPA) which began a vital programme for diversification of agricultural productions, and in turn aided the agricultural progress (especially for producing alcohol and ethanol) Brazil attained so far. Moreover, Brazil is a world leading producer of sugarcane. Nowadays, Brazil is no more relying on international market for fuels. During the 1970s, Brazil undertook many programmes to find more gas and oil. In 20-40 years, the country is expected to become a leading oil exporter as big as Saudi Arabia. At the same time, it is developing alternative and renewable energies like ethanol, alcohol and solar energy; Brazil is also a pioneer in solar energy. On wind energy, she said Brazil had prospect, but not as much for example, as Europe. The main constraint was the very high price of the technology. Brazil has many other potential for developing alternative energies as mentioned earlier and therefore, wind energy is not a priority.

To **Air Vice Marshal M Sanaul Huq**, the ambassador said that the Bangladesh Ministry of Foreign Affairs representatives could provide the proper answer regarding his comment on the Bangladesh embassy in Brasilia. On the other hand, Brazil-Bangladesh relations in past, present and future had and have immense potentials. She welcomed Marshal Huq's comments on cooperation in civil aviation sector, mentioning that the Novo Air had bought two aircrafts from Embraer and is planning to order four more. She also expressed her satisfaction at this. Embraer has been a very successful aircraft company with a global reputation. For example, Air Canada

had 61 Embraer aircrafts in its fleet; she mentioned it as Canada was her previous posting. Nevertheless, she added that she did not know how many Embraer aircrafts were being used in the US and that Embraer aircrafts would be perfect for territories like Bangladesh.

Replying to Mr. **Nurul Islam Hasib**'s query, the ambassador expressed her delight and said that she was waiting for this to be asked. She added that as part of bilateral relations, Brazil can provide training to Bangladeshi football coaches.

To Ambassador **Munshi Faiz Ahmad**'s question, Ambassador Nóbrega said that Brazil had close partnership with Bangladesh in those regards as both countries face some identical problems in terms of ecological catastrophes. The Amazon is not only a river or rainforest, but people are also living there. The Brazilian government and society are fully aware of the delicate balance between preserving environment and development challenges. They are doing everything in their ability to address these properly; nonetheless, much remained to be done.



Concluding Remarks

Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad

Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS

In his remarks, the chair of the session, Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad said that Brazil with more than 200 million people in a land covering over 8.5 million square kms, is rich in natural resources. The country is the world's largest producer and exporter of sugarcane, beef and poultry; it is also a top exporter of coffee and soybean. He added that Brazil has more available farmland than any other country in the world. Its mining industry is booming and the country is a formidable producer of rubber and petrochemicals. Brazil is also the world's third largest commercial aircraft manufacturer.

Discussing economic issues of Brazil, he noted that traditionally, Brazil has been an inward looking country. Only recently it started to look outward more seriously. Brazil's economic growth had been mainly domestically driven. Exports only accounted for about 10 per cent of the country's GDP. A burgeoning middle class, as he opined, created enough demand to allow Brazil to become an economic powerhouse. With rapid economic growth, Brazil started to become more active internationally to assume a natural leadership role globally and build a new image for itself. He also said that Brazil joining other top developing countries like China, India, Russia and South Africa to form BRICS is a testimony to the desires and ambitions of the country.

Shedding some light on the core aims of Brazilian foreign policy, Ambassador Ahmad talked about Bangladesh-Brazil bilateral relations. He said that from the very beginning, Bangladesh and Brazil had maintained good and friendly relations. Distance and lack of connectivity posed a serious challenge to the growth of interaction and cooperation between the two countries. However, in recent years, he emphasised, both countries showed renewed interest in enhancing mutual cooperation. This was reflected in the reopening of Bangladesh embassy in Brasilia (2012) and opening of the Brazilian embassy in Dhaka (2009). The steady growth of trade between the two countries in recent years was another important evidence of this. He noted that Brazil is Bangladesh's 8th largest source of imports. In FY 2012-13, Bangladesh's imports from Brazil were US\$ 801.4 million (2.8 per cent of Bangladesh's total imports) and Bangladesh's exports to Brazil were US\$ 147.22 million. Bangladesh mainly imported animal or vegetable fats, oils and their cleavage products, prepared edible fats, animal or vegetable waxes, sugar and sugar confectionery, iron and steel, cotton, tobacco from Brazil. He also mentioned Bangladeshi exports to Brazil included pharmaceuticals, leather, raw jute, woven garments and iron chain to Brazil. There is a growing interest among Brazilian importers for importing more RMG products from Bangladesh. To reduce trade gap between the two countries

and boost bilateral trade, Bangladesh is seeking duty free access for its products to the Brazilian market.

He further elaborated the current status of bilateral relations between the two countries. Both countries are keen to refocus on their diplomatic engagement and seriously considering conclusion of some agreements for cooperation in various areas, such as: framework agreement on technical cooperation, agreement on agricultural cooperation, agreement on visa exemption, and cooperation in culture, education, human resource development and defence. He noted Brazil had already conveyed its support for Bangladesh's bid to the UN Security Council non-permanent membership for the term of 2016-2017. Bangladesh also sought Brazil's support for joining the Organization of American States (OAS) as an observer. Similarly, Brazil is seeking Bangladesh's support to join the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) as an observer. He suggested that cooperation between Brazil and Bangladesh could be enhanced in a wide range of sectors, including transport, civil engineering, climate change, food security, counterterrorism, sustainable development, etc.

Country Lecture on

Japan-Bangladesh Relations: Comprehensive Partnership



Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) organised its 10th Country Lecture on 21 October 2014 at BISS auditorium, Dhaka. The Country Lecture was delivered by H. E. Mr. Shiro Sadoshima, Ambassador, Embassy of Japan in Bangladesh. He talked about the comprehensive partnership of Japan-Bangladesh relations. Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc, Director General of BISS, delivered the Welcome Address. Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad, Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS chaired the session and delivered concluding remarks.



Biography of

H. E. Mr. Shiro Sadoshima

Ambassador, Embassy of Japan in Bangladesh

Ambassador Shiro Sadoshima was born on 23 October 1953. He studied LLB at the University of Tokyo and graduated in 1977.

Ambassador Sadoshima entered the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan in 1977. He was posted as Counsellor at the Embassy of Japan in Vietnam in July 1994. In 1996, he became the Director of the Loan Aid Division, Economic Cooperation Bureau. In September 1998, he assumed the post of the Director at the China Division, Asian Affairs Bureau of the Japanese Foreign Ministry. In 2000, he again became the Counsellor at the Embassy of Japan in Australia, where he later became the Minister in 2001.

In 2002, Ambassador Sadoshima served as Consul at the Consulate General of Japan in Hong Kong. He served twice as the Deputy Director General at the Economic Cooperation Bureau in 2004. In the same capacity, he served twice in the Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, Southeast and Southwest Asian Affairs Department in 2006.

He became the Director General, Policy Coordination Department, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in 2007 where he assumed the post of President in 2009. In 2010, he became the Director General of International Cooperation Bureau. On October 2011, he was posted as the Japanese Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Bangladesh. Since April 2015, he has been working as the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to the Kingdom of Thailand.



Address of Welcome

Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc,
Director General, BISS

Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc, in his Welcome Address, stated that Bangladesh and Japan had a long history of friendship and deep understanding of each other's culture. With deep gratitude, the people of Bangladesh recall the support and sympathy of Japan during the War of Liberation in 1971. Beginning with Japan's recognition of Bangladesh on 10 February 1972, both countries experienced prompt establishment of diplomatic relations.

The Director General talked about Japan's status as the only non-Western industrial democracy and the global recognition of Japan as a role model for socio-economic development. He mentioned that Japan's persistent approach to focus on human development, keeping distance with any conflicts since the end of WW-II, helped the country to ensure economic prosperity and human security. Japan, as a responsible major power, had greatly contributed to the development of many countries in the world. Talking about Japanese assistance for Bangladesh, he considered Japan as a credible friend and development partner, who had always been generous in providing assistance to Bangladesh. He said that many of Bangladesh's landmark infrastructures bore this testimony, including Chittagong International Airport, the Meghna-Gumti Bridge, Meghna Bridge and most importantly, the Bangabandhu Jamuna multipurpose Bridge.

He highlighted the importance of high level visits by heads of the states and governments as well as other dignitaries for enhancing ties between Japan and Bangladesh. He mentioned about the visit of His Imperial Highnesses, the Crown Prince Akihito and the Crown Princess Michiko (currently Their Majesties The Emperor and The Empress) to Bangladesh as early as 1975. He also said that the recent visits of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to Japan and her counterpart the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Bangladesh added further momentum to the existing bilateral relations and brought mutual benefits for the people of the two great nations.

The Director General said that as a littoral of the Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh is now more significant from both economic and strategic perspectives. He mentioned that the significance of the Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt initiative, which was known as BIG-B, proposed by Japan. He stressed on more people-to-people contact, exchange and joint collaboration among academic institutions of the two countries for deepening the relations. Exchange of music, drama and art should be helpful to know each other more and could make the ties stronger. He said that he still has a great liking for the Japanese TV serial "Oshin" where he found the rural cultures of Japan and Bangladesh rooted quite in a similar way.



Lecture by the Ambassador

H. E. Mr. Shiro Sadoshima

Ambassador Sadoshima said that current major export items like RMG and other products would not be able to sustain without imports of energy resources, production of electricity/power and so forth. Bangladesh, therefore, inevitably would have to diversify a part of its industrial bases. It should have to have a segment that would give more value-added products to be consumed/exported within its border and beyond. Bangladesh has to start moving now, because reorienting a country's industrial bases would take time. Japan is ready to go along with Bangladesh for helping it out in achieving desired goals. This diversification of industrial bases would be the key to Bangladesh's future development.

Ambassador Sadoshima said that Japan eyed on the two oceans, the Pacific and Indian Oceans. It meant Japan would like to expand the sphere of economic activities from Asia-Pacific into this part of the world and from the strategic perspective, Bangladesh occupies a very important position. This message was brought over by the Japanese Prime Minister when he visited Bangladesh. And of course, the discussion started to take place when the Honourable Prime Minister of Bangladesh also visited Japan. Over the years, through exchanges of visits between the Prime Ministers, Japan and Bangladesh had come into two agreements, the 21-point and 25-point agreements, issued in May 2014 and September 2014 respectively. Bangladesh should proceed along with the idea of building the Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt (BIG-B). Bangladesh should start moving and prepare itself for diversifying its own industrial bases. One part should be reoriented towards more value-added ones. In that way, Japan hoped Bangladesh would consolidate its base for future economic development and play even more important role in the economy, politics as well as international politics. From Japanese perspectives, Bangladesh should look at the Indian Ocean and Central Asian countries. To bring around more stable and prosperous economy and stable society into the entire region, Bangladeshis obviously should play a very important role. Japan would like to be with Bangladesh.

Mr. Sadoshima said that Japan embassy in Dhaka provides a good environment for potential Japanese investors who wanted to come. The ambassador said that not only the products, but when the textile sector of Bangladesh is considered, 80 per cent of ready made (RMG) is going to North America and European markets from Bangladesh. Though only 2 per cent going to Japan, there are huge potentials. Japan has a huge buying power. Bangladesh is the second biggest RMG exporter while Japan belongs to the top 3 importers, yet Bangladesh is exporting a very small amount there. Not only those sophisticated industrial bases, but also the RMG and so forth can be explored. Markets for RMG can also be explored. Thus, now it is time for taking action and inviting the Japanese potential investors.

Japan began talking with Bangladesh government for establishing an industrial park for Japanese investors. The Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority (BEPZA) agreed to provide two buildings exclusively for the Japanese Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). It is expected in due course of time, lot more Japanese SMEs will come over to invest their money and start their production in Bangladesh. However, along this, Japan urged Bangladesh government to orient the country's policy in a direction to approach eastern markets, i.e., the Asia-Pacific. There is not only Japan, but there are also China, Korea and many others who can buy Bangladeshi products. Unfortunately, this moment, Bangladesh's orientation is looking towards West. Ambassador Sadoshima suggested and urged Bangladesh to take a very serious look at the East.

The ambassador said that Japan is taking a serious interest at Bangladesh's pharmaceuticals industry that accounted for the third largest export item. Perhaps for Bangladesh, RMG will come first, agricultural products as the second and then come pharmaceuticals, medicines and so forth. When one would look at the countries on the line of US\$ 1000 GNP per capita line, it can be found that Bangladesh can produce almost all those medicines, drugs, vaccines within its own territory. At the time of Bangladesh's independence, domestic companies occupied only 2-3 per cent of the country's pharmaceuticals market. But when the numbers of today would be looked at, it is 97 per cent which is huge. It means Bangladesh can produce almost any kind of medicine and vaccines which is remarkable. The country is exporting them to many countries, say the African continent and so forth who can not afford to buy medicines from the American, European or Japanese markets.



There is a good reason which has also been found by Japanese manufacturers of medicine making machines. One of them came over and introduced Mr. Sadoshima to a story which was: to handover a machine to a pharmaceutical company, 100 per cent hygiene is a must as the machine would be used to make medicines. To do this, the manufacturers would bring all necessary parts into the buyer's country and then put those up for delivery to the buyer. But a very special technique is also needed here: welding of standard steel and so forth. However, in Bangladesh, those technologies and services can very easily be acquired from the market and those are very good as well. This was, perhaps, one of the important reasons Bangladesh could attain the aforementioned feat. Of course, there are many other reasons, policy orientation and so forth. Now, Japan is paying more serious attention to those capabilities Bangladesh has already demonstrated. Unfortunately till now, Bangladesh with its status

captured little in the Western markets, indeed exploited only half of the chances received. Ambassador Sadoshima thus urged Bangladesh to take a look at these issues.

He thanked China for its marvellous economic growth over the last three decades and Korea as well. The volume of trade and investment is huge among the countries of the Pacific Ocean region. Perhaps, two-thirds of GDPs and GNIs are occupied by the activities among the member nations in the region. For the Asia-Pacific, many people already argued it is one of the engines of the entire world or global economic growth. And of course, now this part of the globe is a joint force with the Indian Ocean region's growth. Thus, why would not Bangladesh take full advantage of this opportunity? Japan also said that it could sit just beside Bangladesh to help. That was the gist of the message Ambassador Sadoshima wanted to deliver through his lecture and of the Japanese Prime Minister's visit to Bangladesh couple of months ago.

Open Discussion

Following the lecture, a lively open discussion took place where distinguished scholars, members of the academia, representatives of multi-disciplinary professional bodies, representatives from the foreign missions, government and non-government agencies, policy makers and members of the media actively participated.

Ambassador Mohsin Ali Khan said that Sonargaon Hotel, Bakhrabad gas field and many other projects were accomplished through Japanese assistance. He appreciated Ambassador Shiro Sadoshima's comments on trade and investment, expressed support for all these ventures and the BIG-B initiative. He wanted to know more about the BIG-B, the ideas of the Ambassador himself as that would help the audience to understand this important proposal. He added that in earlier days, particularly in his tenure, the Japan Foundation used to exchange many academicians, journalists, media people and cultural functions between Japan and Bangladesh. He wished the Foundation do the same at present as well.

Major General (retd.) M A Matin said that the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) had always been supportive of Bangladesh in economic activities. He wanted to know about Japan's functions, what kind of support Japan got from Bangladesh government and also the concerned Japanese department. There are problems hindering implementation of several projects. He said that albeit Japan will come forward with assistance programmes for Bangladesh, working on and finding out solutions of the hindrances would be necessary so that both sides can be benefited.



Muhammad A. Hye, Professor, East-West University, said that people who dominated the world, such as the British or Americans, could do so due to their effective system of education. Bangladesh and Japan should broaden cultural communication and academic exchanges more at every level. Translations of literary works of both countries could be helpful to this end; e.g., the TV series *Oshin*,

broadcasted in Bangladesh in the early 1990s, helped acquaint Bangladeshi viewers with the rural Japanese life. He added that he went to attend an invitation from Japan, where the memoir of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was translated into Japanese language.



Ambassador Jamil Majid stressed on the need to know more about Japanese culture. Japanese author Murasaki Shikibu wrote the first novel in any language, "*The Tale of Genji*"; Chikamatsu Monzaemon, famous playwright who wrote the national epic of Japan was known as Japan's

Shakespeare. Ambassador Majid expressed his optimism that people of Bangladesh would be interested to know more of Japanese culture. He praised the idea of more cultural exchanges suggesting that the embassies of both nations could play more active role in this respect.

Ambassador Dr. Afsarul Qader pointed to Mr. Sadoshima's mentioning of Bangladesh's success in supplying intermediate products like chips for vending machines. He was interested to know more about the issues and problems of renewable and nonrenewable energies as the ambassador said that Bangladesh's advantage with natural gas would not be long term. Bangladesh has been using lots of Japanese products especially cars; the country's market had almost fully been occupied by Toyota. He asked if Ambassador Sadoshima could persuade Toyota to develop a hybrid kind of engine for Bangladesh so that the country could save money, gas and could use renewable sources like solar energy.



Ambassador Humayun Kabir talked about some words used by Ambassador Sadoshima, e.g., strategic corner, a lynchpin in regional and interregional contexts, connecting Bangladesh to the larger strategic construct of Southeast Asia and India for the value chain that was hoped to be developing etc. He



believed that Bangladesh should look into these realistic future scenarios. Then he asked Ambassador Sadoshima about his own thoughts on Bangladesh's preparedness for bridging strategic horizons, particularly focusing on Southeast Asia including China, Japan, India and the ASEAN. Bangladesh is an important component in that mosaic. Is the country thinking in terms of Bangladesh-Japan bilateral relations while Ambassador Sadoshima's comments offered thoughts on global relationships? Then he mentioned the BIG-B initiative (Japan), the Maritime Silk Route (China), the Southern Silk Route and wanted to know Japan's views on these. Albeit Bangladesh having a huge workforce, so far the country focused only on cheap or low cost labour, but what Ambassador Sadoshima suggested, would not be low cost. He asked if the Ambassador had any idea of helping Bangladesh develop human resources alongside infrastructural development.

Dr. Mizanur Rahman Khan, Professor, Environmental Management, North-South University said that Japan's budget for education and defence is quite different from that of Bangladesh. Moreover, the mutual inseparability of economic and human development is pretty much dissimilar in two countries. Japan is top in energy efficiency in the world. Bangladesh should seek and enhance cooperation with Japan, which will surely be cheaper than generating new sources of energy, i.e., Bangladesh can seek Japanese assistance for clean coal technology. There are good possibilities for strengthening cooperation in the environmental aspects.



Mr. Qu Guangzhou, *Charge d'affaires*, Chinese Embassy in Dhaka said that China and Japan are not competitors in Bangladesh and they are both neighbours. On China-Bangladesh trade gap, he said that China is not trying to pursue trade surplus. China-Bangladesh trade volume reached US\$ 10.3

billion last year and is expected to rise increasingly. Yet, the gap is 0.2 per cent compared to the total trade volume. China will encourage more Bangladeshi exports, e.g., fruit juice. Around 15,000 apparel factories in Bangladesh, cotton, garments machinery, including experts and technicians from China helped Bangladesh gain trade surplus against the US. Bangladesh exported US\$ 25 billion worth of apparels to those destinations. China is boosting relations with South Asia. During President Xi Jinping's visit to India in September 2014, it was decided that Chinese investments will reach US\$ 30 billion. China will provide concessional loans to South Asia worth US\$ 20 billion and about 25,000 scholarships for promoting Chinese culture. Bangladesh, as an Asian country has great opportunities for further development and China is ready to cooperate more in that regard.

Brigadier General (retd.) Mofizur Rahman said that Japan and Sweden are famous worldwide for their innovativeness. He added that after visiting a Japanese factory in an Export Processing Zone (EPZ), he was highly impressed with their excellent quality management. There are many qualities that helped Japan reach today's level. He asked how Bangladesh could grow quality consciousness and innovativeness.

Lt. Colonel (retd.) M Shahadat Hossain emphasised on the "Look East" policy and pointed to the importance of learning language for promoting people-to-people contacts. He recommended a training centre for educating Bangladeshi workers at all levels.

Dr. Abul Kalam Azad, Professor, Department of International Relations, Jahangirnagar University, said that the proposed BIG-B initiative as discussed not only includes land routes but also marine ones. Bangladesh, like Japan is vulnerable to natural disasters. How can Japan assist in that regard?





Response by the Ambassador

For BIG-B and the industrialisation in Bangladesh, Ambassador Sadoshima said that there are bottlenecks in speeding up these processes. For instance, power shortage, transformation and underdeveloped infrastructure. Japan would like to extend logistic and monetary assistance, e.g., Bangladesh would receive a large amount of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) over the years to come, to effectively deal with these challenges. Development of infrastructures would be a critical part of the BIG-B plan. Japan would like to see Bangladesh, Myanmar, India in this project for developing better transport connection. Bangladesh can then enjoy better road facilities and the distribution of power in this region will be more efficient.

Speaking on Japan-Bangladesh cultural relations, the Ambassador informed that unfortunately, during their tenure, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) had resorted to bringing down expenditures. Cultural activities also experienced reduced allocations consequently. Nonetheless, with the assumption of power by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Japan is thinking of allocating greater funding for promoting Japanese culture in abroad. Ambassador Sadoshima informed that he just returned from a meeting in Tokyo, where discussions were held about how Japan could reorient its cultural diplomacy with other nations. But how much the Japanese Ministry of Finance would be convinced for a sizable fund for this purpose, was not certain. If they would, that could enable the Japan Foundation to expand and diversify Japanese cultural activities abroad. Japanese authorities, unfortunately, could not do those in the past. Now, there is a hope that situations will change for the positive, as there is a bigger budget around. About Bangladesh-Japan joint ventures, he said Bangladesh showed to be quite promising in commanding in implementation of such projects. But the implementation of the ventures is counted against deflation ratio that is adjusted at the end of each fiscal year. Total average of profitable ventures is 15, globally. Bangladesh sometimes experienced 10 at the lower end, and at the highest 15. A couple of years back, it reached 18 but was just 13 last year. Japan is now encouraging Bangladesh to speed it up, but the transaction costs in Bangladesh are perhaps too high and processes too complex, delaying projects. Japan understood these problems as processes are complex there too. American and European businessmen would often complain to Japanese authorities about why transactions or projects would take so long to complete. He advised to remove these which would help raise the implementation ratio.

On human resource development, he said that merely the vast manpower of Bangladesh may not help in diversifying industrial bases. They should rather be trained for formal, e.g., high-tech industries. Putting more emphasis on vocational and on-the-job trainings will be essential for Bangladesh's future development. Japan will assist with the clean coal technology for the proposed Matarbari power plant. For energy efficiency, he said that Bangladesh is ahead of Japan as it has installed solar panels even in remote parts of the country. However, Japan has invested considerably in thermal energy and as the country had lots of volcanoes, those can be used for that purpose as well. On Bangladesh's apparel industry, he mentioned that Uniqlo operators used to sell 100 million pieces of undergarments worldwide a year; one third was produced in China, one third in Vietnam and the rest in Bangladesh. Therefore, their quality should be same everywhere. China and Vietnam would give incentives to individual workers, but such things did not work well in Japan. On environmental cooperation, Ambassador Sadoshima said that Bangladesh asked Japan to provide some orientation to marine sciences. Japan will send scholars from the Hokkaido and Tokyo Universities to lecture on oceanography, marine biology and other such disciplines at Dhaka University.



Concluding Remarks

Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad

Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS

In his concluding remarks, Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad talked about the characters that made the word Nippon (Japanese for Japan), meaning the “Land of the Rising Sun” with a rich and colourful history. He mentioned that Japan enjoys the second highest life expectancy in the world and the infant mortality rate is the third lowest globally.

Noting the economic strength of Japan, he said that the country’s economy is the third largest in the world by nominal GDP, the fourth largest by purchasing power parity, the country being the second largest developed economy in the world. He also noted several other areas where Japan stands among the highest performing countries, including automobile manufacturing, electronic goods, innovation and so on. Besides, it is the world’s largest creditor nation having a considerable net international investment surplus.

Regarding Bangladesh-Japan relations, Ambassador Ahmad said that exchanges and interactions between the people in Bangladesh and Japan could be traced back centuries. He brought up some notable early contacts, including the friendship between Rabindranath Tagore and Tenshin Okakura, a distinguished Japanese fine arts scholar and Taikan Yokoyama, a Japanese master painter who profoundly affected and influenced each other’s work. He also mentioned his earliest recollection of Japan-Bangladesh cooperation from the early 1960s, when Japan was actively engaged in providing technical assistance for mechanisation of agriculture in the then East Pakistan.

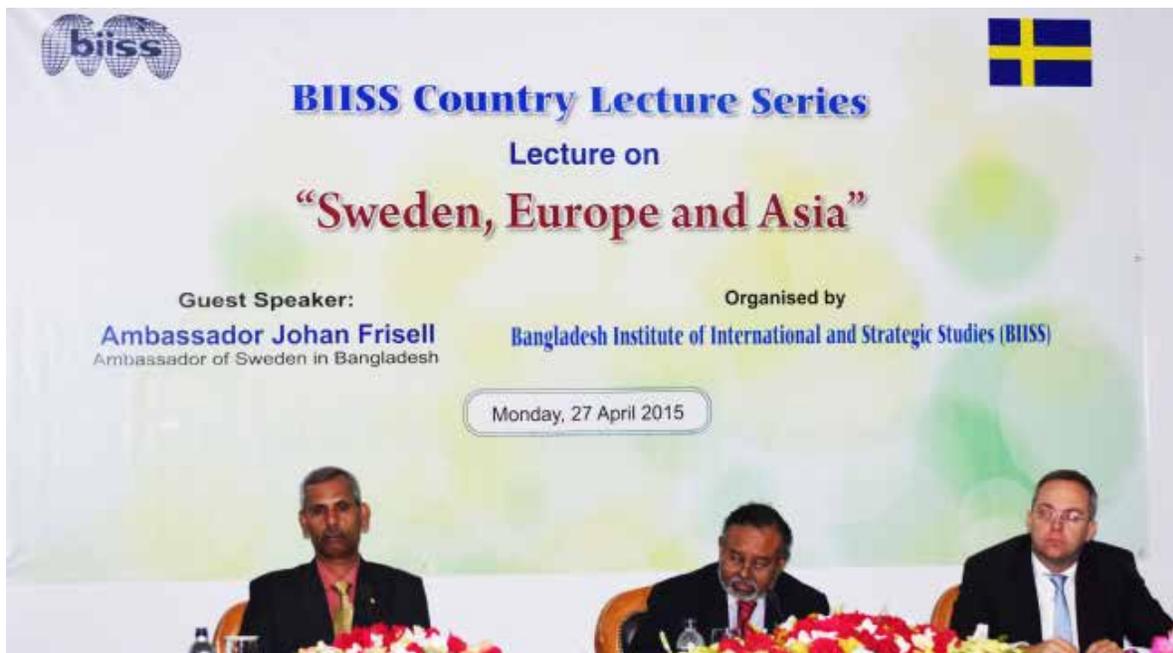
He talked about Japan’s unequivocal support for the Liberation War of Bangladesh, mentioning the role of Late Mr. Takashi Hayakawa as Member of Parliament and later as a Special Envoy of the Japanese Prime Minister to Bangladesh. He also remembered the role of late Ambassador S A Jalal, who was working in Radio Japan, in spreading the message of Bangladesh’s War of Liberation in Japan. Japan was among the first countries to accord recognition to Bangladesh in February 1972. Since then, ties between both countries grew steadily through economic and technical cooperation, cultural exchanges and regular exchange of visits, notably the historic visit of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1973. He mentioned that the year 2012 marked the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Noting Japan as one of the most important development partners of Bangladesh, he discussed about Japanese assistance to Bangladesh's economic and social development efforts, such as US\$ 11 billion of aid in crucial priority areas including infrastructure building and human resources development, poverty alleviation, good governance, etc. He also talked about bilateral trade relations, FDI from Japan, private sector cooperation, and so on.

Ambassador Ahmad highlighted the regular exchange of high level visits, particularly Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's official visit to Japan in May 2014 that launched the "Japan Bangladesh Comprehensive Partnership". In this agreement, Japan pledged several assistance schemes for Bangladesh: assistance for implementing the Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt (BIG-B) plan; ODA loans for undertaking major projects notably Ultra Super Critical coal fired power plant and so on. Conversely, Bangladesh offered several incentives for Japanese businessmen, including an exclusive industrial park and special allocations in existing EPZs. The Chair also talked about the official visit of Japanese Prime Minister H. E. Shinzo Abe in September 2014. Important outcomes were: Bangladesh withdrawal of candidacy for a non-permanent seat of the UN Security Council in favour of Japan and relaxing the GSP Rules of Origin requirements for Bangladeshi RMG exports to Japan.

Regarding trade relations, he added that bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Japan are flourishing. Bangladesh's export to Japan increased by 2.5 times in the last five years. He mentioned that Japan was the 11th largest RMG export destination for Bangladesh, the 7th largest overall export destination of its products and 5th largest import source for Bangladesh last year. He also shed some light on increasing Japanese investment as well as growing numbers of Japanese companies in Bangladesh.

Country Lecture on Sweden, Europe and Asia



Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) organised its 11th Country Lecture titled “Sweden, Europe and Asia” at BISS Auditorium on Monday, 27 April 2015. The lecture was delivered by H. E. Ambassador Johan Frisell, Ambassador of Sweden in Bangladesh. Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc, Director General, BISS delivered the address of welcome. Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad, Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS chaired and concluded the session.

Following the lecture, a lively open discussion took place where distinguished scholars, members of the academia, representatives of multi-disciplinary professional bodies, representatives from foreign missions, government and non-government agencies and policymakers actively participated, raised questions and gave their valuable comments, suggestions and recommendations.



Biography of

H. E. Mr. Johan Frisell

Ambassador, Embassy of Sweden in Bangladesh

Ambassador Frisell has been in the Swedish diplomatic service since 1994. He has been posted to St. Petersburg (Russia) and Nairobi (Kenya). He served as Deputy Representative to the European Union Political and Security Committee during his posting to the Swedish Permanent Representation to the European Union in Brussels (Belgium). In Stockholm, he has worked at the Western Balkans division of the Eastern Europe and Central Asia Department. He was head of the division twice; at the European Security and Defence Policy division and Eastern Europe division respectively.

He has worked in the foreign policy bureau of the Prime Minister as well.

Between 2010-2014, Mr. Frisell served as director and deputy head of the Security Policy Department at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

He is married to Eva Hagstrom Frisell and they have three children.



Welcome Address

**Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc,
Director General, BISS**

Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc said that BISS has been regularly organising these lectures with a view to enrich understanding about countries with whom Bangladesh has significant bilateral relations. He rendered heartfelt gratitude to His Excellency Ambassador Johan Frisell, the Ambassador of Sweden to Bangladesh for his presence and consent to deliver lecture on “Sweden, Europe and Asia”.

General Rahman mentioned that Sweden was one of the first European countries to recognise the independence of Bangladesh on 04 February 1972 soon after Bangladesh's War of Liberation. Sweden and other Nordic countries rendered invaluable support to the newly independent country. Sweden and Bangladesh started to develop friendly and mutually beneficial ties since Bangladesh's birth. It also provided considerable assistance, especially to health and education sectors of Bangladesh. Its contribution to the health sector programmes in Bangladesh was also its largest anywhere in the world.

He remarked that Bangladesh enjoyed good trade relations with Sweden, which has been increasing. Bangladesh mainly exports readymade garments including knitwear and woven garments, frozen food, agricultural products, jute goods such as jute-yarn, ropes, bags, sacks, jute handicraft etc, leather goods and footwear, ceramic products, as well as ICT products and services to the Nordic markets. Bangladesh is also building multipurpose oceangoing ships and vessels for some Nordic countries. On the other hand, it imports chemical products, plastic, wood pulp, machineries, vehicles, dairy products, food items etc. from Sweden. He further added there are more than 50 Swedish or Swedish-related companies represented in Bangladesh either by themselves or by their agents. Total trade including export and import between Bangladesh and Sweden amounted over US\$ 500 million US dollars. In the fiscal year 2013-14, Bangladesh exported goods worth US\$ 421.74 million to Sweden. It imported goods worth US\$ 69.40 million, which is an increase of 13.4 per cent from the previous year. It showed the bilateral trade balance is tilted in Bangladesh's favour due to higher export volumes of apparel items to Sweden.

He referred to newspaper reports that Sweden's trade with Bangladesh currently accounted for 0.06 per cent of Sweden's total exports and 0.18 per cent of imports. There are huge potentials for attracting Swedish investment in sectors like renewable energy, paper pulp, jute, leather-products, textile and readymade garments, etc. He said that Bangladesh and Sweden can increase their mutual trade and investment. There are enormous opportunities of further deepening cooperation and trade between

the two countries, including in information technology, energy and infrastructure development and so on.

According to General Rahman, Bangladesh always considers Sweden a trustworthy friend. Swedish development cooperation with Bangladesh began soon after Bangladesh's independence in 1971 and exceeded US\$ 1.7 billion since then. The cooperation emphasised on areas of health, inclusive economic growth, skill development, human rights and good governance. Besides, primary education, water and sanitation, climate change adaptation and disaster risk management are significant areas. Sweden has been working closely both with the government of Bangladesh and with other international and national development partners to achieve these goals.

Talking about foreign aid, he said that apart from good trade relations, Bangladesh also received significant aid and assistance from Sweden. The country pledged to provide Bangladesh with 1.6 billion Swedish Krona, or 1,659 Crore Taka for development assistance purpose in the next seven years. This is a part of Sweden's development strategy for Bangladesh for 2014-2020. He expressed confidence that this assistance would substantially help Bangladesh to become a middle-income country by 2021.

General Rahman then stressed on people-to-people ties and said these are equally or in some cases, more important. He noted that many Bangladeshi students are now studying in Sweden—thanks to generous scholarships provided by that country. This played a catalytic role in enhancing people-to-people contact and understanding their culture. He was optimistic that Swedish government's support for providing higher education to Bangladeshi students would continue in the future.

At the end of his speech, General Rahman expressed his gratitude to the distinguished and learned audience for their presence and expressed his hope that the lecture by H. E. Johan Frisell, the Ambassador of Sweden in Bangladesh would help enhance the bilateral relations and cooperation between the two friendly nations.



Lecture by the Ambassador

H. E. Mr. Johan Frisell

H. E. Mr. Johan Frisell started that Swedish foreign policy is based on a few principles. These principles are the platforms from which Sweden derives most of its foreign policy actions and develop bilateral and multilateral relations. The first principle is solidarity. One hundred and fifty years ago, Sweden was one of the poorest countries in Europe. In the last decades of 19th century, 1 million people of Sweden migrated to the United States because of poor condition. Sweden was a poor and agricultural country and the country of emigration where people would leave and seek a better life somewhere else. The solidarity in today's foreign policy is very much attached to international development cooperation. Sweden held on to the 1 per cent target of GNI. Currently, there are only 4 countries who reached that target. Sweden shows a lot of solidarity with the third world. The country is a strong proponent of decolonisation. It joined the non-aligned movement to show its solidarity with the countries who were about to free themselves from colonial rule. Sweden is a large donor of humanitarian assistance. It is in the top five providing humanitarian aid.

The second starting point for Swedish foreign policy is value. Sweden has a value based foreign policy. It believes in respecting human rights, gender equality, and democratic systems. Part of its development assistance is also value oriented. Sweden promotes sexual and reproductive rights. The country is mainstreaming gender aspects. Sweden pursues these values also in its political dialogue.

The third area is the openness to the world. It is both by necessity and virtue what actually changed the historical course of agricultural Sweden. Basically, for last 150 years, Sweden has been a country of open trade with hardly any trade barriers. The experience of letting go all quotas and custom tariffs has been truly a rewarding experience for Sweden. The country could not protect itself behind customs tariffs and quota barriers. The openness is also shown in policies of migration. Sweden is open to labour migration and has very tight cooperation with Bangladesh on these issues. The openness also meant the country would encourage a global liberal trade system. It has non tariff regime for Bangladesh for everything except arms. It would encourage Bangladesh to liberalise import of Swedish goods.

Openness also means promoting a lot of Swedish exports to Bangladesh and Bangladeshi export to Sweden. According to him, RMG sector is the strength of Bangladesh economy. Leather, ceramics pharmaceuticals etc are some other sectors where Bangladesh had potentials to export. Mr. Frisell thinks that Bangladesh is the country where the Swedish business community can invest. Swedish government makes available scholarships for Bangladeshi masters students every year. Last year, Sweden accepted 68 or so in full scholarship programme.

International cooperation is the fourth point. Sweden can not solve all problems by its own. It has had 80,000 men in peacekeeping missions. Sweden is very much active in climate change negotiations. It is also working on conflict prevention and disarmament. All these issues would have to be addressed at a global platform primarily in the United Nations. Sweden hosted the first global UN Conference on Environment in 1972 which was the first attempt to address the environmental issue on a global platform. International cooperation also made Sweden a steadfast supporter of international law. Bangladesh solved a maritime dispute with Myanmar and India by respecting international law. He appreciated it and said that it is the way how countries should solve disputes. He wished that countries in the South China Sea and East China Sea would be mature enough to solve their problem this way.

He said that Sweden's economic growth has been primarily based on the possibility to export its products to other countries. Hence, the country will need to develop trade relations with Asia including Bangladesh. He also talked about the need for deepening Sweden's relations with China, the countries of South East Asia, India, Japan and South Korea.

Neutrality is the fifth principle. Sweden has been a neutral country basically for 200 years. It was one of the largest war fighting countries in Europe for 500 years. It fought every single country such as Germany, Denmark, Russia, Poland, etc. It required, and then got a new king in the early 19th century. He said that since 1840, Sweden has never been at war. It was based on the hypothesis of neutrality. Mr. Frisell said, "if you keep out yourself from any potential conflict by not taking stance then you will avoid being dragged into a war. This was our policy during the First World War and the policy was successful. Our strategy of neutrality was successful during the Second World War as well." At that time, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, all were neutral. That was the basis of Sweden's post-Cold War security policy. Neutrality keeps Sweden out of war primarily by not taking stance.

Mr. Frisell stated that Sweden faced a dilemma in the 1960s and 1970s. The dilemma was: could Sweden promote solidarity and values being neutral? Solidarity and values could not be promoted by being neutral because philosophically there are contradictions. The biggest riddle for him was to explain, why the Swedish Prime Minister engaged so heavily against the American aggression in Vietnam while there was not a single statement from the Swedish Prime Minister during the entire 1971. What were the fundamental differences that made Sweden maintaining solidarity and values in the case of Vietnam, but in the case of Bangladesh, it relied heavily on neutrality? Mr. Frisell did not have the answer yet. He knew Sweden was not alone. Therefore, from the end of the war on 16 December 1971, it took long time to regain the distance that Sweden had not covered before.

He opined that all these five except neutrality are valid in today's context as well. The notion of solidarity got preference instead. He subscribed to the motto that large countries will have to be more careful than small countries. If each large country can take precautionary measures in behaving with small countries, the world will be much more peaceful.

As an expression of solidarity, Sweden became a member of the European Union in 1995. Before the end of the Cold War, Mr. Frisell said, "you cannot join the European Union and can stay neutral." European Union is the union of values.

Mr. Frisell wanted to give an overview of driving forces of Swedish foreign policy and how its different components ended up here in Bangladesh. He said that it is important to develop the bilateral trade and investment relations of Bangladesh and Sweden. He concluded by saying he will continue to drive

all the areas of international cooperation where Sweden and Bangladesh were already partners (i.e., peacekeeping, global migration and climate negotiations). He argued that Sweden found Bangladesh as a close partner in these regards.



Open Discussion



Following the lecture, a lively open discussion took place where distinguished scholars, members of the academia, representatives of multi-disciplinary professional bodies, representatives from the foreign missions, government and non-government agencies, policymakers and members of the media actively participated.

Dr. Mohammad Mahfuz Kabir, Senior Research Fellow, BISS, asked a question regarding the ISIS emergence in Asia, Middle East and North Africa and wanted to know

the role of Sweden in this regard.

Dr. Mustafizur Rahman, Chairman, Institute of Development Strategy (IDS), wanted to know about two different systems of Sweden, i.e., ombudsman and direct democracy and raised a question whether these sorts of things can be effective in Bangladesh.



Mr. Nazmul Arifeen,

Research Officer, BISS, raised a question regarding incoming population and wanted to know about the popular perception of Swedish people regarding incoming population.



Md. Mokammel Haque, Former Secretary, Bangladesh government, asked for Ambassador's views on West and East European conflict.

Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad,

Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS, also asked a question on the East-West



Conflict in Europe. As Ambassador Frisell said that European Countries felt threatened from Russia, Ambassador Ahmad proposed to see the scenario in a different way that Russia felt threatened and if there is any way of accommodating the threat that could bring peace in that region.

Brig. General M. Mofizur Rahman, ISO consultant, remarked that Sweden and Japan are top in innovation. He opined that innovation would not come by hard work only; it is something built in. He wanted to know from Mr. Frisell about the education system and other factors which made the Swedish nation so innovative.



Ambassador Shahed Akhtar asked about Swedish migration policy towards Bangladesh and also commented that Sweden being well known as a pioneer of disarmament is still selling arms to the whole world which is contradictory. He wanted to know Mr. Frisell's view in this regard.

Mr. Mahbubur Rashid Bhuyian, Research Fellow, BISS, wanted to know how Sweden became a developed country from an underdeveloped situation.



Ms. Razia Sultana, Research Fellow, BISS, focused on the Rohingya refugee problem of Bangladesh and asked whether Sweden can cooperate with Bangladesh in this regard. She also raised another question regarding higher studies



in Sweden and mentioned that, earlier, there was a scheme that welcomed foreign students without tuition fees in Sweden. But now Sweden imposed tuition fees which made higher studies more challenging for Bangladeshi students. She then asked how Sweden can cooperate with Bangladesh in this area. She

also wanted to know about gender equality and how Bangladesh can improve the situation on gender equality.

Mr. Sheikh Maqsood Ali, former member, Planning Commission, Bangladesh asked about Sweden's situation in respect to income inequity.





Response by the Ambassador

In response to **Dr. Mohammad Mahfuz Kabir's** question regarding ISIL emergence, Ambassador Frisell said that it will be extremely difficult to handle the situation. He informed that almost two hundred young people travelled to join ISIL from Sweden who are mostly second generation immigrants from Muslim countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia and Lebanon. He added that among European countries, Sweden received largest number of Syrian refugees after Germany. The Swedish government decided to provide military trainers to Iraqi Kurdish guards to patrol and resist attacks of ISIL. Thus, in many different forms Sweden is trying to contribute to counter ISIL.

Regarding ombudsman, Mr. Frisell said that it is a function within the government to receive complaints of citizens against the authority. This ombudsman shall have such a high status within the government system that he/she can take forward such complaints to the responsible authority. The ombudsman is employed by the government or the state. Thus he/she is also a part of the government. He remarked that it is necessary to have proper combination between the ombudsman and the rest of the authority for its proper operation. Discussing about the situation of this model in different countries, Mr. Frisell said that in many countries, the ombudsman is not independent and has no courage to criticise high officials of government or the ombudsman is put too far out from the government and will work more like an NGO where his/her work carried no weight. He noted that the challenge for any other country interested in this model is making a way to provide independence for ombudsman and make sure he/she is well anchored within the government system. In reply to the query regarding direct democracy and referendum, Mr. Frisell informed that Swedish constitution has a provision for a referendum and it has been used five times in last 70 years. He remarked that most politicians would not like referendum as this will hamper the comprehensiveness of the government. If the result of the referendum will go against the government, it will mean this will have impact on the rest of the budget. For the success of any government to run the entire government programme, it is disturbing to have a referendum. Mr. Frisell expressed his unwillingness to comment on which system will be appropriate for Bangladesh and said this must be analysed in the context of Bangladesh's government and a democratic system.

In reply to **Mr. Nazmul Arifeen's** question, Mr. Frisell said that Swedish people's view of immigrants is overall welcoming. Sweden received different waves of immigrants in last 60/70 years and practically all migrant groups were well integrated in the society without losing their own national identity. He informed that around 10,000-12,000 Bangladeshi people are living in Sweden and they are well integrated. He expressed satisfaction over large popular movements to protect and support Swedish

immigrants and said this is a kind of social mobilisation to protect Swedish multicultural pluralistic society. He also emphasised on immigrants' role in the Swedish economy. The country did not have enough labour force and Swedish women would give birth to few kids. As a result, to sustain economic activities, Sweden would need immigrants.

Talking about NATO and Russia, Ambassador Frisell said that for NATO, Russia was not a threat, but for Russia, NATO was a threat. There remained an asymmetrical relationship between them.

In reply to the query of **Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad**, Mr. Frisell said that Russia did not want to see NATO on their borders. It would see NATO as antagonist and a threat. It was their way of seeing NATO. Still, there are cooperation between the two. They still had joint exercises; there is Russian military representation in NATO. He remarked that Russia is very well aware of NATO's doctrine. But he did not think Russia can be a part of NATO right now.

Regarding the education system of Sweden, Mr. Frisell said that Sweden has a very strong policy regarding ethical business and expects their companies to follow international norms, social and ecological responsibilities. Swedish citizens are very conscious about environmental safety and labour rights. Talking about the Swedish education system, Mr. Frisell said that though it is not perfect but will allow freedom, imagination and stimulation. Swedish government provides free education to students up to university which allows every student to take the opportunity to continue their studies up to master's level. Exclusion from school is very rare, which facilitates innovators to come up with some brightest ideas. This unhindered education system facilitated Sweden to produce a large number of innovators. He further added that in Sweden, students are expected to raise questions and argue with their teachers about what they are taught. This allows Swedish students to think differently, come up with new hypothesis which as a result make them innovative and different from others.

Talking about migration, Mr. Frisell said that Bangladesh is a country which likes to facilitate its citizens to go abroad for work and then return back to Bangladesh. As Sweden is importing labour, it is important for Sweden to have a good relation with the sending country. That is why Sweden is cooperating in labour migration. In response to the contradiction between disarmament and selling arms, Ambassador Frisell said that Sweden has quite a vigorous system of selling arms to those countries which reached a certain level of democracy, respected human rights and had peaceful relations with neighbours. He thought it was legitimate to use arms for self defence. Sweden has no problem selling arms to those countries which has good relations with their neighbours and are buying those arms only for self defence or United Nations peacekeeping. Once Sweden was a large producer of anti-personnel mines, but considering its inhumane nature, it stopped producing those mines.

In reply to **Mr. Mahbubur Rashid Bhuyian's** question, Ambassador Frisell said that there is an illusion that Sweden was rich. He mentioned that only 5 per cent of the total population was rich and the rest was poor. Poverty was there and eradicated only in the first decade of the 20th century.

Mr. Frisell noted that Rohingya issue is truly one of the tragic and unresolved problems. He remarked that the best solution for the Government of Myanmar would be to create conditions for this group to live peacefully in their own country. He mentioned the global resettlement scheme is too small to accommodate the large number of Myanmar nationals. It is necessary to recognise the Rohingyas as refugees for repatriation to the third country. Currently only small part of Myanmar nationals are recognised as refugees. Addressing the question on free tuitions for foreign students, he informed that

Swedish universities had free tuitions for foreign students for many years. But depletion of university resources and falling of the quality of education are two reasons for imposing tuition fees. Not only that, because of free tuition, Sweden received many students in different universities who are not motivated for study. Reintroduction of tuition fees helps Sweden to find sincere students who are really motivated for study. Talking about gender equality, Mr. Frisell said that to ensure gender equality, Sweden analyses gender aspects of all projects and try to evaluate how those projects reach to women. According to Mr. Frisell, there is no simple way to ensure gender equality, but he expressed his satisfaction that it is happening in Bangladesh.

Regarding **Mr. Sheikh Maqsood Ali's** question, Mr. Frisell said that Sweden is truly a social democratic country. Here social democracy means giving support to weak groups in society with proper health care, education, paying rent, etc. But he mentioned that Sweden is not as equal as it used to be compared to many other countries. The difference between the rich and poor is quite low and there is a social cohesion in Sweden. There are no people in the country who are extremely rich or very poor.



Concluding Remarks

Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad

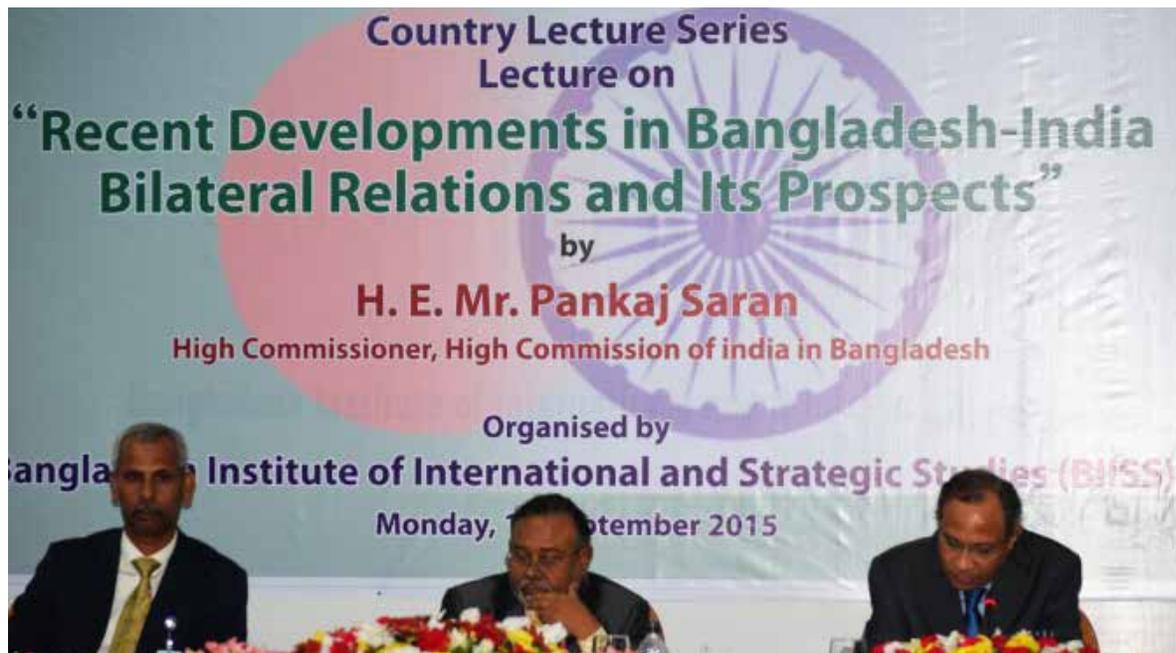
Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS

Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad said that Bangladesh and Sweden has been enjoying warm and excellent relations since the recognition of the newly independent Bangladesh by Sweden on 4 February 1972. Development cooperation began soon after and exceeded US\$1.7 billion since then. Talking about economic relation with Sweden, he noted that Bangladesh has growing trade relations with that country, largely due to increasing export of apparel items. According to him, there is huge potential for enhancing bilateral trade and investment relations between the two countries further. He also opined that Bangladesh and Sweden are enjoying increasing cultural and educational exchanges. Bangladeshi Diaspora and student community in Sweden are growing, particularly with the rising number of Swedish Institute Study Scholarships. Various other initiatives like Young Connectors of the Future Programme were also facilitating intercultural dialogue and knowledge sharing. He hoped there will be stronger cooperation in terms of development cooperation and trade and investment, particularly reaping the full benefit of Swedish government's new cooperation strategy.

At the end, he extended his special thanks to Ambassador Johan Frisell and his colleagues from the Swedish Embassy and rendered his heartfelt gratitude to members of the academia, businessmen, representatives of think-tanks, media and officials for their participation.

Country Lecture on

Recent Developments in Bangladesh-India Bilateral Relations and Its Prospects



Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) organised its 12th Country Lecture titled “Recent Developments in Bangladesh-India Bilateral Relations and Its Prospects” at the BISS Auditorium on Monday, 14 September 2015. The lecture was delivered by H. E. Mr. Pankaj Saran, High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh. Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc, the Director General of BISS delivered the Address of Welcome. Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad, Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS chaired and concluded the session. Following the lecture, a lively open discussion took place where distinguished scholars, members of academia, representatives of multi-disciplinary professional bodies, representatives from the foreign missions, government and non-government agencies, policymakers and members of the media actively participated.



Biography of

H.E. Mr. Pankaj Saran

High Commissioner of India in Bangladesh

Mr. Pankaj Saran presented his credentials as India's High Commissioner to Bangladesh to the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on 14 March 2012. In his career as diplomat, Mr. Saran has served in different capacities in different Indian Missions in Moscow, Washington D.C., Cairo and Geneva. He earlier served as the First Secretary (Political) in Bangladesh from 1989 to 1992. At the Headquarters of Ministry of External Affairs, he served at the East European Division, as Deputy Secretary in the Foreign Secretary's Office and headed the Division in capacity of Joint Secretary (North) that deals with India's relations with Nepal and Bhutan.

Mr. Saran served twice on deputation to the Prime Minister's Office, first as the Director from 1995 to 1999, dealing largely with economic, energy, science and technology issues, and subsequently as Joint Secretary in the Office of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh from 2007 to 2012. In the latter capacity, he worked in the external affairs, defence, national security, atomic energy and space sectors. Mr. Saran obtained his Masters in Economics from Delhi School of Economics, Delhi University, after which he joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1982.

He is married with two sons. His wife, Preeti Saran is currently India's ambassador to Vietnam. His interests include tennis, bridge and reading.



Welcome Address

**Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc,
Director General, BISS**

In his opening remarks, Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc welcomed all to the Country Lecture and said that BISS has been regularly organising the lectures with a view to enriching people's understanding about countries with which Bangladesh has significant bilateral relations. He expressed his heartfelt gratitude and thanks to H. E. Mr. Pankaj Saran, High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh on behalf of all members of BISS for being present despite his busy schedule.

General Rahman said that India is certainly the most important neighbour of Bangladesh and one of the key development partners of the country. He acknowledged the extraordinary assistance India provided during the War of Liberation of Bangladesh conveying gratitude to the people of India through the High Commissioner. He added that India attained commendable economic development and emerging as a powerhouse in education, science, technology and innovation. He mentioned that the economy of Bangladesh has also been growing over six per cent for the last decade. It also achieved most of the MDGs and made significant advancement in poverty eradication, women empowerment, health care facility and education.

Noting the recent developments in bilateral relations between Bangladesh and India, he argued relations witnessed a significant upswing over the past decade. During the period, the two countries signed a number of treaties that encouraged trade and economic cooperation, provided easier connectivity resulting in more people-to-people contact and addressed a number of security issues. He added that during the recent visit of the Indian Prime Minister to Bangladesh in June 2015, both countries signed 22 agreements. India extended a US\$ 02 billion line of credit to Bangladesh and pledged US\$ 05 billion worth of investments. As per the agreements, India will invest in setting up of 3000 MW LNG based power plant and 1600 MW coal fired power plant. On the other hand, both countries also increased their trade from US\$ 03 billion to over US\$ 05 billion in last five years.

General Rahman also talked about the very important Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) signed between Bangladesh and India with execution from 31 July 2015. He termed it as a new chapter of Bangladesh-India bilateral relations and this certainly paved the way to resolve other longstanding issues between the two friendly countries.



Lecture by the High Commissioner

H. E. Mr. Pankaj Saran

H. E. Mr. Pankaj Saran, High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh, structured his lecture into two parts. In the first part, he highlighted the recent developments in Bangladesh-India relations. Then, in the second part, he discussed the future prospects of bilateral relations. Again, he divided recent developments in three clusters. While the first cluster included issues which either have been resolved or came closer to resolution, the second incorporated new areas of cooperation and the third one included issues which are in work in progress. He recalled his last year's visit at BISS, where the dominant question was what would be the impact of India's General Election on Bangladesh-India relations. He argued that it has been 16 months since the new government in India took office. Given the scale of the change in India, it would be reasonable for Bangladesh to expect positive developments of bilateral relations with a new set of policymakers in India. Initial months of the new government in India focused on establishing new equations and getting to know each other. This was manifested in a series of high level contacts between the two governments. The scale and frequency of these contacts are truly impressive. It reflected the implementation of India's "neighbourhood first policy" on one hand and Bangladesh's desire to reach out to the new Indian leadership on the other. Both complemented each other.

The first exposure of Bangladesh government to India was the surprise invitation in the inauguration ceremony of the new government in India on 26 May 2014. He termed the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June 2015 as historic and added that the meeting of the two Prime Ministers was not so easy because of India's internal political dynamics though it was done. He emphasised that the visit of Mamata Banerjee, the Chief Minister of West Bengal, was very significant which indicated a shift in the relations. The joint declaration was named as *Notun Prajanma: Naji Disha* and it was for the first time that a joint declaration was given a title. It was an important document which covered almost all important aspects of Bangladesh-India relations. He commented that there are three types of achievements of the visit which included joint documents, MoUs and some other symbolic events.

Mr. Saran also talked about the Land Boundary Agreement (LBA). He said that the agreement was signed within 12 months after the new government took office in India. The Indian parliament decided to enact the particular amendment despite having a high degree of internal political debate. He then focused on issues like strengthening security cooperation, deepening development partnership, energy cooperation, trade and investment facilitation, connectivity, TV exchanges and people-to-people contacts. He said that Bangladesh exported to India over US\$ 600 million in FY 2015 to India.

Bangladesh gained new trade facilities due to the positive impacts of the duty free regimes. He argued that by the increasing number of immigrants, the growing intensification of the relationship could be understood. Mr. Saran also talked about issues like harnessing the advantages of geographical contiguity, building a framework for economic inter-linkages, operationalising the concept of sub-regional cooperation (BBIN), provision of third country transit facilities to each other, new modes of connectivity such as rivers and sea, blue economy, science and technology, environment, education and healthcare. He talked about preventing illegal trade in the borders and legalising border trade, strengthening institutions, dealing with scarce resources such as water, irregular movement of people, combating drug trafficking and other illegal activities, border infrastructure and bridging the trade gap. Lastly, he commented that both Bangladesh and India has an active, dynamic and wide ranging relationship marked by goodwill and a problem-solving approach.

On the question of future prospects, Mr. Saran commented that no relationship can be taken for granted, nor can it be based on a sense of victimhood. Prospects will continue to be good as long as there is political will on both sides; there will be public support for the relationship, the advantages will be felt by the people and have a broad consensus on common objectives. Prospects also depend on how both countries will evolve in terms of their economic, social and cultural attributes. Asia is changing and so is the world. The prospects of future will depend on how Bangladesh and India will use this newfound freedom and how both implement what has been agreed upon. In conclusion, he added that the relationship with Bangladesh is very important for India and strong relations between the two countries can open new prospects for both countries.



Open Discussion

Following the lecture, a lively open discussion took place where distinguished scholars, members of the academia, representatives of multi-disciplinary professional bodies, representatives from foreign missions, government and non-government agencies, policy makers and members of the media actively participated.

Ambassador Humayun Kamal congratulated the Indian government and Indian High Commissioner in Bangladesh for resolving the issue of land boundary. He commented that it has given a lot of optimism and confidence for both countries to resolve major issues by negotiation. He discussed



some other issues which needed immediate attention. The first one is border killing. He recognised it as a very sensitive and emotional issue and urged for a possible immediate solution. The second one was about visa restriction. He said that a huge number of Bangladeshis are going to India for religious and medical purposes. He requested India for easing the visa restriction. He also raised the issue of connectivity among neighbouring countries and commented that land locked countries like Nepal and Bhutan are facing difficulties. Hence, effective connectivity in the region can help all the countries. He also emphasised

on a developed rail service between Bangladesh and India. He urged for an immediate solution of the difficulties faced by Bangladesh to export jute in India.

Major General (retd.) Ferdous Mian, Former Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS pointed out concerns about the River Linking Project of India. He discussed how the project is going to create devastating effects on Bangladesh. He



wanted to know the view of H. E. Mr. Pankaj Saran on the project and its solutions.

Professor Dr. Ainun Nishat talked about water issues. He commented that basin wise approach should be taken to develop and protect the rivers. He argued that institutional frameworks would be needed to develop the water management issue.



Ambassador Shamim Ahmed commented that relations between India and Bangladesh now reached a new height over the last few years and thanked Mr.



Pankaj Saran for his contribution in this development. He also said that even though being close neighbours, bilateral contact between the two countries' policymakers are more business-like rather than friendly communications. He urged for more frequent contact between the two countries for resolving contentious issues.

**M o h a m m a d
Nurul Huda,**
former Inspector

General of Bangladesh Police, raised some of the recent developments in India and how such developments can affect Bangladesh. The issues were mainly India's ban on meat export to Bangladesh and stopping the smuggling of cattle to Bangladesh. He asked: 'Is there any potential threat that extremists can use it as a factor to instigate terrorism?'



Shahriar Zaman, reporter, *The Dhaka Tribune*, brought the topic of "Falani case" and wanted to know how such incidents might have impacted on border security forces. He also wanted to know the latest updates regarding the Ganges water barrage.



Response by the High Commissioner

H. E. Mr. Pankaj Saran said that border killing is very unfortunate and has been discussed at the highest level. The security forces are committed to bring down the number of border killing to zero. He opined it as a shared responsibility of both countries to keep peace in border areas. Regarding the visa restriction, he agreed that India needs to improve the service. He informed that three new visa centres has already been opened in Barisal, Rangpur and Mymensingh. Now there are total ten visa centres in Bangladesh. He commented that the current visa system is much better and more flexible than three or four years before.

On the connectivity with Nepal and Bhutan, he said that India has already permitted Nepal and Bhutan to use the transit route of India. He hoped that trade among the neighbouring countries will grow. He then talked about the issue of improving rail service system agreeing that some technical problems still exist. There has been discussion on Khulna-Kolkata train service and Agartala-Belonia bus service. He termed the BBIN Motor Vehicle Agreement as a successful one. Regarding the question of jute export to India, he replied that India already received the message about the concern of Bangladesh and looking into the matter. On the issue of the River Linking Project, Mr. Saran said that both countries are negotiating on water issue. He emphasised that it is also important on how both countries will manage water assuring India will not do anything which can create any problem for Bangladesh. He also mentioned on the need of dialogue to understand what the project is and hoped that as “water” is the key issue of bilateral negotiation, it will be settled soon.

Mr. Saran said that good relation between two countries is mainly dependent on political will. Understanding between Bangladesh and India has changed a lot. Both countries learnt gradually from dealing with their initial traumas like partition, border issues, political assassinations, shaky institutions, huge insecurities on both sides, etc. He added that the visit of Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India to attend the funeral of Indian President Pranab Mukherjee's wife Suvra Mukherjee within six to seven hours time was an act of courage and an example for the rest of the region. He mentioned that the hallmark of Bangladesh foreign policy has been the constant promotion of the idea of regional cooperation. Bangladesh has been a pioneer in regional and sub-regional cooperation like SAARC and is consistent in promoting regional cooperation. He agreed that more meetings and bilateral contacts between the two countries are needed; even telephone calls should be in use in good times and bad times frequently to promote bilateral contacts easily and effectively.

Mr. Saran stated that connectivity is an imperative for bilateral relations. There are both good and bad connectivity; good connectivity would need to be discovered to enhance trade and economic

relations as well as to address transnational crimes, extremism, insurgency, terrorism, etc. He remarked that in future, both countries will need to build more good connectivity which will benefit both the countries, mainly emphasising on geographical connectivity. According to him, the number of border killings has also gone down, it needs to be taken in zero level. He again opined that the border will have to be peaceful and border crossing must be in the legal framework. Regarding the Ganges issue, he mentioned that materials are available now and measures are needed to be taken.



Concluding Remarks

Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad
Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS

Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad said that the Country Lecture on India is an attempt to take stock of the important recent developments in Bangladesh-India relations, how these created a very positive atmosphere to address some of the other lingering challenges as well as the various emerging issues. Bangladesh-India ties have grown from strength to strength as mutual understanding and mutual respect grows stronger, resulting in expansion of mutual benefit and win-win cooperation. He added that Bangladesh-India relations today are at their best in forty years.

He mentioned there were many ups and downs in Bangladesh-India relations. But when both sides has shown greater understanding of each other's needs and interests, the relations curve moved sharply upwards. During these periods, he mentioned some of the important positive developments between Bangladesh and India such as - signing of the Ganges water treaty; the CHT treaty; increasing cooperation in traditional and non-traditional security issues, including cooperation in border management, countering terrorism, militancy and transnational crimes; mutual liberalisation of trade and market access regimes; investment; gradually increasing connectivity by land (both road and rail) as well as by water and air; greater cooperation in sharing of power and energy, infrastructure building; settlement of the maritime boundary dispute; ratification and implementation of the LBA; enhanced partnership in regional and international cooperation; numerous other less visible but equally significant and fast increasing cooperation in education and culture; science and technology as well as people-to-people exchanges. It is now imperative on both sides to sustain the momentum and continue to move forward together towards a better and brighter shared future for two countries and people. The recent milestone, visit to Bangladesh by the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi contributed tremendously in adding to this momentum.

Ambassador Ahmad mentioned that the only way forward for both countries would be possible by sustaining the present friendship and cooperation. He talked about the ratification of land boundary treaty and its implementation as one of the most recent achievements. This has been possible by three main steps - abiding and inherent goodwill and the feeling of kinship despite having occasional hiccups; hard work and efforts at different levels; and courage and determination of the political leaders at critical times. He said that the LBA proved empathy, goodwill and patience. He also opined that the government, civil society and others will need to continue upholding mutual trust between the countries.

Country Lecture on

“Booming Chinese Economy: Prospects for Bangladesh”



Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) organised its 13th Country Lecture titled “Booming Chinese Economy: Prospects for Bangladesh” at BISS Auditorium on Thursday, 01 October 2015 as part of its regular Country Lecture Series. The lecture was delivered by H. E. Mr. Ma Mingqiang, Ambassador, Embassy of China in Bangladesh. Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc, Director General, BISS delivered the address of welcome. Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad, Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS chaired and concluded the session.

Following the lecture by the Ambassador, a lively open discussion took place where distinguished scholars, members of the academia, representatives of multi-disciplinary professional bodies, members of diplomatic corps as well as representatives from development partner organisations, officials of the government and non-government agencies and policymakers actively participated and deliberated on various aspects of Bangladesh-China relations.



Biography of

**H. E. Mr. Ma Mingqiang,
Ambassador, Embassy of China in Bangladesh**

Mr. Ma Mingqiang presented his credentials as China's Ambassador to Bangladesh to the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on 03 February 2015. In his career as a diplomat, he has served in different capacities in different missions in Korea, Afghanistan and Malaysia.

Earlier, Mr. Mingqiang served as Secretary General in ASEAN-China Centre in China from 2011 to 2015. Before that, he served as Counsellor and Deputy Director General of the Department of Asian Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China (MFA) from 2008 to 2011.

Mr. Mingqiang graduated from the Chinese University and started his early career as a Staff Member at the Department of Translation and Interpretation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China (MFA) in 1986.

Mr. Mingqiang was born in January 1965.



Welcome Address

Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc,
Director General, BISS

Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc started his welcome address by saying that the lecture on **“Booming Chinese Economy: Prospects for Bangladesh”** is very important for understanding the Chinese economy and for deepening Bangladesh-China relations that have observed its 40th anniversary in 2015. Since the economic reforms and opening up to the outside world, China has seen its economic prosperity and global influence fast regaining over the last three decades. In the process of the revival of its power and prestige, China prioritised economic development. It is now in the process of restructuring its development model and is emphasising consumption-led growth while continuing to sustain exports and receive inward FDI. China is also trying to achieve greater balance in geographic distribution of development as well as income distribution. These helped China to potentially become the largest market for the rest of the world and today, it is the largest trading partner of 124 countries including Bangladesh.

With economic development, China is becoming an active and important player in major global issues, e.g., trade regimes, sustainable development, global economic governance, etc. Active participation and decisive role in the WTO, BRICS, G-20, SCO, APEC, APTA; interactions with ASEAN, SAARC or BCIM-EC have the international profile of China. Side by side, the world also witnessed unprecedented economic growth of China due to its foreign assistance and trade concessions, mobilising outward FDI, showcasing product and country-image, engaging with multilateral economic diplomacy, developing wide-ranging south-south collaboration, instituting several FTAs and PTAs, internationalising Chinese companies and making overseas ventures available.

He said that exchanges and ties of friendship between Bangladesh and China could be traced back to antiquity. But since 1975, Bangladesh-China relations transformed from cooperation to partnership. While political relations have been nurtured through frequent bilateral high-level visits, economic relations have also grown significantly. China extended substantial grants and loans to Bangladesh, technical and financial assistance to many projects of significance for the Bangladesh economy. Its extensive support to Bangladesh in building and maintaining Bangladesh’s defence capabilities is noted with particular appreciation in the country. More importantly, China is the largest trading partner of Bangladesh with total annual trade reaching more than US\$ 08 billion in FY 2014, which is expected to surpass US\$ 24 billion by 2030. FDI from China is growing considerably; total investments covering both private and public sectors reached more than US\$ 02 billion. There remained huge scopes for increasing trade and realising investment opportunities between the two countries. In this

respect, connectivity is a potential area of further cooperation, where the existing BCIM-EC initiative and China's mega concept of 'one belt one road' are relevant.

He opined that other potential areas of cooperation include energy resources, water resources, maritime affairs, capacity building of Bangladesh's sea ports, infrastructure investment, education, human resources development, science and technology, etc.



Lecture by the Ambassador

H. E. Mr. Ma Mingqiang

H. E. Mr. Ma Mingqiang started his lecture by saying that the development of China would not pose any threat to the world, but rather create another opportunity by admitting fear among some people that the Chinese economy is slowing down and the world economy might suffer from that.

Mr. Mingqiang shared his understanding of China's economy with the audience: what is the problem, what is the status quo and what is the future of Chinese economy. He talked about bilateral relations on how China is relevant in Bangladesh's development.

He shared his understanding of current state of the China's economy. China emerged from the ruins of war in 1949 and adopted its open up policy for the world since 1978. In 1972, the per capita GDP of China was US\$ 224. However, within last 30 to 40 years, China became the second largest economy which surpassed Japan in 2010. He noticed that now China is contributing about 30 per cent of the world economic growth. It achieved really a lot.

Regarding the discussion about slowing down of the Chinese economy, he argued that it has controlled slowing down. The country's economic performance is still in a reasonable range. He argued that according to economic indicators, Chinese economy is generally stable. The first economic indicator is the GDP. The GDP growth was 7 per cent in the first half of 2015, consistent with the annual projection of China. The growth remained in the forefront in comparison to other countries' growth.

The second indicator is employment. The employment situation is good in China, meaning the economy is not bad in shape. According to Mr. Mingqiang, the third indicator is the income growth stability. The rural income growth is even higher than the urban income growth in China. Fourth, the commodity price remains stable in China. China's agricultural situation is very much relevant to the commodity price as China is the world's biggest agricultural country. In 2015, the growing production is expected to be another achievement which could provide an important foundation for commodity price stability. Thus, there are not much fluctuation of the commodity price in China. Fifth, the sphere of foreign trade is stable. During the first seven months of 2015, the export sale was 0.8 per cent compared to the same period in 2014, while imports were down by 14.6 per cent. The slowing down in export was the normal fluctuation of economic operations. However, the export structure is improving in terms of product market exposure and regional intuitions.

Mr. Mingqiang informed that the stock market accounted only 5 per cent of the social conduit in

China. He added that the stock market of China is 15 per cent of the total wealth of residents. This is not very significant in terms of percentage of the Chinese market. The seasonal fluctuations of stock market has no impact on overall economy. He stated that investment in fixed asset is expected to be slow. Continuous recovery of real estate transactions and the investment in infrastructure is expected to move slowly but steadily. Mr. Mingqiang added that Chinese are creative in terms of technology and industry.

He mentioned that the fundamentals of economy has not changed. China maintained a medium growth rate and its restructuring and upgrading drive are continuing to progress. He suggested that people do not have to be pessimistic about the Chinese economy. Later, he elaborated it looked like the current Chinese government is very much determined to slowdown the economy in order to have more sustainable and clean economy. In 2014, the government closed down 30,000 polluting industries in northern China. He further stated that China still has many tools in the box to manage the economy.

Mr. Mingqiang started the second part of the presentation about the future. He stated that the Chinese economic restructuring has been speeding up and there remained a huge potential in growth of domestic demand, urbanisation and industrialisation from which, consumption is playing an increasing role in driving the economy and contributing about 60 per cent of the total growth. He added that domestic demand, urbanisation and industrialisation would contribute about 60 per cent of their total economy.

Ambassador Mingqiang described that by 2020, China would rebuild the rundown city areas where 100 million people would live. There would be a lot of constructions in few years. He added that they would guide 100 million people from rural areas to nearby cities and towns in central and western parts of China. This means a kind of urbanisation of over 100 million people in the mid-west part of China. China would also grant urban citizenship to over 1 million people who already moved into cities from rural areas. It means the country would build lots of houses, educational institutions and other services for them. There would be 11 major construction projects. The Mat Project in China included 800 billion Yuan, which is around US\$ 125 billion. For high speed train across China, the country has investment projects. China also has the urban renewal projects. All these are now being implemented. Hence, the country is hoping these would give some kind of increment to the Chinese economic growth.

Mr. Mingqiang expected the momentum of industrial upgrading will continue to be strong. The integration of internet, modern information technology with traditional industries is speeding up. New industries like small equipment, new material, biomedicine, power medicine, energy consumption, environmental protection are pulling this sector. China closed a lot of energy consuming industries, but also created more energy saving industries and opened up lots of labs and research centres. He added there will be a broader development space between and the regions. China will balance the development in different regions. The country expected the extension of the expressway, high speed way and information facilities will speed up intra-regional economic growth.

He expected that China will be more innovation-driven and consumption led. Chinese are focusing more on innovation. He used the words mass innovation and mass entrepreneurship in this regard adding the country is encouraging more domestic consumption.

He said that China have more than 7.5 million new university graduates every year. The proportion

of youth with higher education is already very close to that of the OECD countries. The Chinese are increasing investment in certain development, capacity building and enhancement of innovation. Thus, they are providing strong support for higher quality and high efficiency economic growth. For the moment, China is enjoying high household savings rate. Huge potential of consumption, huge and intelligent labour force, mid-income population, robust development momentum of service sector and vast potential rich market will support China. He was confident that China's economy would remain stable and strong in the years to come. He also believed that China would remain one of the locomotive economies in the world.

In regard to bilateral relations and in line with regional cooperation, Mr. Mingqiang stated that Chinese President said in New York that China is duty bound to contribute to world economic growth. The Chinese are benefitted from economic cooperation; hence, they are duty bound. In this context and with this understanding, China came up with the initiative of "One Belt, One Road" and also with the initiative of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Because, according to World Bank (WB) projection, the annual shortage of fund in per capita sector in Asia would be around US\$ 800 billion. Mr. Mingqiang argued that the World Bank or any other single financial institution can not solve this problem. That is why, China initiated the AIIB and the country is very glad that many countries proceeded to be a member. He added this is something the members will set up together, use it together and benefit together.

In 2015, while speaking in New York, Chinese President announced that China will set up a new fund called, China South-South Cooperation Fund with the initial contribution of US\$2 billion. The country also initiated US\$3.2 billion for Climate Change Cooperation Fund. That would help developing countries to address the issue of climate change. The country also set up other funds and hoping these



entire funds would further strengthen cooperation between China and other countries. Some people asked about the motives of these Chinese initiatives. He argued this is obvious that China will be also benefitted from all these initiatives.

Talking about Bangladesh, Mr. Mingqiang noted that Bangladesh-China bilateral relations are moving forward with a very strong momentum. He stated that the leaders of both countries met frequently.

There is lot of consensus. The Chinese are implementing those consensus. Both countries have a list of cooperation projects. He assured that China will follow up with those projects one by one. Ambassador Mingqiang said that China is going to have two industrial parks in Bangladesh. One will be in Chittagong. The estimated investment will be around US\$ 2.6 billion at the first stage. China and Bangladesh are in cooperation to set up other parks close to Dhaka with around US\$ 02 to 2.5 billion. He expected that one industrial park can create around 200,000 to 250,000 new jobs for Bangladeshis. Both countries have some other major projects under discussion.

In terms of trade, Mr. Mingqiang said that according to Chinese statistics, trade between Bangladesh and China reached US\$ 12.5 billion in 2015. The Chinese are not happy with that actually. They are encouraging more and more Chinese investment in Bangladesh. He argued that Bangladesh will be able to export more to China. In education, China is trying to provide as many scholarships as possible. The country provides 282 scholarships for Bangladeshi students to study in China every year. It also provides short-term technical training for officials of Bangladesh. Mr. Mingqiang stated that China-Bangladesh relations really enjoyed extensive social support, believed that this relation will be strengthened and move forward from time to time.

In regard to BCIM-EC, Mr. Mingqiang argued that members of the group had many discussions, two working group meetings were held and they were expecting to meet at Kolkata in India in 2016. There has been a call to come together to facilitate cooperation along the Silk Road and BCIM. Among BCIM members: Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar - there are different perspectives as well as there are so many similarities. He hoped that people would realise this is something that would yield benefits. Of course, for certain projects, one country will come up with benefits of 70 per cent and for some projects, one country might come up with benefits of 20-30 per cent. Mr. Mingqiang reiterated his hope that Silk Road and BCIM initiatives will be implemented well. And, member states will be benefitted bilaterally or multilaterally. The BCIM initiative is a part of the Silk Road arrangement. He invited the people of the region to realise the benefits of the two arrangements together.

Ambassador Mingqiang stated that Bangladesh is well located, indeed geographically placed among the three big economies - India, ASEAN and Northeast Asia (China, Japan and South Korea). It is really in a position to be benefitted from the physical connectivity and the initiatives. He hoped that Bangladesh and China can speed up Silk Road and BCIM processes. For the future, both countries will need to sit down and provide institutional support to the BCIM or Silk Road arrangements.

Open Discussion

Following the lecture, a lively open discussion took place where distinguished scholars, members of academia, representatives of multi-disciplinary professional bodies, representatives from foreign missions, government and non-government agencies, policymakers and members of the media actively participated.



Mr. Mokammel Haque, former secretary, Commerce Ministry, and President of the Commonwealth Association of Bangladesh, expressed his view that China is a great country and it would continue to be a great one. China's total GDP would surpass the GDP of the United States by 2050. The country developed a lot in the last 30-35 years. He suggested arranging a meeting of senior people, including top ambassadors with a view to choosing the right way to explore better

ideas and brainstorm regarding all sunset industries. He also pointed out that Bangladesh will lead the garments industry in future and he wanted to know whether China is going to help Bangladesh in garments sector and pharmaceuticals by providing supervision.

Ms. Tanzila Chowdhury, student, Dhaka University, wanted to know whether China is going to set up a deep sea port in Chittagong or not.



Lt. Colonel (retd.) Shahadat Hossain suggested two things, first is that the Chinese President should visit Bangladesh. Second, he asked for Chinese assistance in learning oceanography for higher education.

Dr. Sheikh Maqsood Ali, former secretary, asked the Chinese Ambassador whether China can help Bangladesh in managing surplus water in the rainy season, store necessary water in order to use it in the winter season and also to tackle devastating flooding in low lying areas of Bangladesh with Chinese technology and experience.



Colonel (retd.) Emdad Uddin Ahmed commented on Chinese development and asked a question: will China donate and invest in Bangladesh as development partner?

Shahriar Zaman, reporter, The Dhaka Tribune, raised two questions: (a) whether China is going to issue any travel alert for its citizens in Bangladesh as there was a murder of an Italian

citizen working in an NGO of Bangladesh? and (b) how will China treat this incident?

A terrorist attack or normal criminal activity?



Mr. Humayun Kabir Bhuiyan, reporter, *The Daily Independent*, praised Chinese prosperity and growth. Later, he wanted to know whether everything in connection with

BCIM is going smoothly or not. The second part of his query was - China had huge investments in Myanmar and Pakistan; but in Bangladesh, it did not have that much investment, what are the reasons behind it?

Ambassador Humayun Kamal asked a question regarding how Bangladesh can be benefited from the booming Chinese

economy and stressed on

increasing people to people connectivity through tourism. He also suggested to ease the visa system between the countries and to lessen the interest rate regarding loans provided by China.



Amabassador Dr. Afsarul Qader wanted to know about the connectivity in the regional context with regard to China-Nepal-Sri Lanka-Pakistan-India relations. He mentioned about US\$ 01 trillion

Chinese investment in the USA and opined it is safer to invest in Bangladesh.

Dr. Mustafizur Rahman, chairman, Institute of Development Strategy (IDS) stated that craziness of China for technology is one of the reasons for its development. He suggested that if Bangladesh wants to be benefitted from China, it will need to know how Chinese economic growth happened, how the technological development took place, and how the education system was developed.



Ambassador Farooq Sobhan thanked the Chinese Ambassador for his wide ranging and thought provoking speech. He asked the Ambassador whether Afghanistan-Pakistan-India-Bangladesh and China can link the New Silk Route through combined initiative. He also asked how states can establish cooperation regarding connectivity and energy in this region. In his last question, he wanted to know whether the AIIB would support the major projects in this region.



Mr. Sohel Chowdhury, former commerce secretary, Bangladesh, informed that he was in China in 1983 and since then, China made a tremendous progress in the last 32 years. With regard

to Bangladesh-China trade, he mentioned about the huge trade deficit of Bangladesh and asked if there are any speedy way to reduce the gap.



Mr. Fazlul Haque, chairman, National Youth and Social Welfare Council, said that he visited China for about 65 times and observed the development process there. He focused on people to people connectivity to strengthen the relations and added that

visit of young entrepreneurs from Bangladesh to China will be useful to learn the effective ways to become a successful entrepreneur.



H. E. Mr. Iwan Wiranata-atmadja, Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia to Bangladesh raised two questions: one for Chinese Ambassador and, the other for Chairman, Board of Governors, BIIS. He asked how optimistic Chinese Ambassador is in establishing an industrial park in

Bangladesh. He added that if China can make a breakthrough in this regard, then many investors from other countries will come forward to do the same. In the second question, he asked if BIIS can arrange a discussion to find solution of internal problems of Bangladesh regarding trade. He also mentioned that if Bangladesh can solve its own problems, then it will be easier to implement joint projects quickly.





Response by the Ambassador

In response to **Mr. Mokammel Haque's** query, Ambassador Mingqiang replied that China really wants to extend its helping hand to Bangladesh. It is not a labour intensive country, but technology intensive one. Nowadays, the labour force is getting much more expensive. The country will relocate and provide more facilities with giving much more importance on this. He added that Chinese investors will invest in jute sector of Bangladesh and they are optimistic about economic zone as well.

Ambassador Mingqiang thanked **Colonel Shahadat** for promoting Chinese culture in Bangladesh. He added that in future, China will think of taking manpower from Bangladesh. In the case of helping in oceanography, China is ready to cooperate with Bangladesh.

In reply to **Dr. Sheikh Maqsood Ali**, Mr. Mingqiang said that China is mountainous and Bangladesh is a low lying flat country. But, China has a mutual cooperation with Bangladesh. It will help take initiatives to contain groundwater. In reply to a query of **Tanzila Chowdhury** about setting up a deep sea port in Chittagong, he stated that China is very capable of building this kind of infrastructure. He also added that Bangladesh should keep faith in China and Chinese capability.

In response to **Dr. Mustafizur Rahman's** query, Ambassador Mingqiang replied that development model of China might not be same for Bangladesh because the perspectives of China are different. Regarding technology, he informed that he will encourage investors of China to set up a factory in Bangladesh for the easy transfer of technology.

In answering the question of **Ambassador Farooq Sobhan** about New Silk Route, Mr. Mingqiang mentioned that it has been included in the 'One Belt, One Road' policy and will help to ensure connectivity. He emphasised on infrastructural development to accelerate connectivity. Ambassador Mingqiang noted that China is working in its own way to bring peace in Afghanistan as it is a part of this route. He expected that the AIIB will fund for infrastructural development of major projects in this region.

In response to **Mr. Humayun Kabir Bhuiyan's** queries, the Chinese Ambassador stated that BCIM is very important to China and they are very optimistic about it. He mentioned that they should not stop ongoing co-operation and rather emphasise on further relations. About investment, he stated that China and Chinese companies are ready to invest in Bangladesh and the country already invested in many projects.

To **Ambassador Dr. Afsarul Qader**, Ambassador Mingqiang said that it is necessary to know each

other for the promotion of regional cooperation. In this regard, he said that many people of China do not know much about Bangladesh and the vice versa. Both countries will need to work together on the issue. In reply to **Ambassador Humayun Kamal**, he said that China is working to ensure people to people connectivity through promotion of tourism. He also mentioned his efforts to ease the visa system. Regarding loans, he said that in contrast to other on-going donor-funded projects in Bangladesh, implementation cost of Chinese projects are 10-20 per cent lower. He informed that they are working on the reduction of interest rate and there would be a solution.

In reply to **Mr. Fazlul Haque**, Ambassador Mingqiang reiterated his efforts to strengthen people to people connectivity. To **Shahriar Zaman's** queries, the Ambassador ensured that China has not issued any alert for travelling in Bangladesh and that he is not in a position to say anything about whether it is a criminal activity. It depends on further investigation.

In response to **Mr. Sohel Chowdhury**, Ambassador Mingqiang said that China is going to invest heavily in Bangladesh to reduce the trade gap as well as informed about the eagerness of China to invest in jute sector of Bangladesh.

In reply to a query of **H. E. Mr. Iwan Wiranata-atmadja** about establishing an industrial park in Bangladesh, Ambassador Mingqiang said he is optimistic because not only they are working on the fact, but also the Chinese government is encouraging the investors to invest globally.

Replying to **Colonel (retd.) Emdad Uddin Ahmed**, Mr. Mingqiang remarked that China is ready to invest in Bangladesh and Chinese companies are very keen in this regard. The country will prefer a win-win co-operation and here both countries will be benefited.



Concluding Remarks

Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad
Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS

Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad summed up the session by stating that Bangladesh and China has been enjoying warm and excellent relations. He thanked the Ambassador for his very enlightening lecture that included important insights current Chinese economy and its future. He mentioned that the Chinese Ambassador indicated how the steadily growing Chinese economy will help to push the win-win comprehensive partnership of cooperation between the two countries to a new level. The prospects of Bangladesh-China relations continued to be good and will be better in coming days. It is suggested by the Chair that trade imbalance should be settled in a holistic way.

Country Lecture on

Bangladesh-EU Relations: A Multifaceted Partnership



Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) organised its 14th Country Lecture titled “Bangladesh-EU Relations: A Multifaceted Partnership” at BISS Auditorium on Thursday, 06 October 2016 as part of its regular Country Lecture Series. The lecture was delivered by H. E. Ambassador Pierre Mayaudon, Head of Delegation, European Union Delegation to Bangladesh. Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc, Director General, BISS delivered the address of welcome. Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad, Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS chaired and concluded the session.

Following the lecture, a lively open discussion took place where distinguished scholars, members of academia, representatives of multi-disciplinary professional bodies, representatives from foreign missions, government and non-government agencies and policymakers actively participated, raised questions and gave their valuable comments, suggestions and recommendations.



Biography of

H. E. Mr. Pierre Mayaudon,
Head of Delegation
European Union Delegation to Bangladesh

Ambassador Pierre Mayaudon graduated from the Institute of Political Science of Paris, where he studied public law, economy and foreign affairs. He then entered the National School of Administration (ENA), which is the top institution in France for training of higher civil servants. At ENA, he undertook diplomatic training, including a one-year internship at the French embassy in Korea. He also studied all matters related to government administration and finally entered the French Ministry of Defence, specialising in international affairs related to defence industry.

Official Positions:

2011-2014: Deputy Head of Delegation, European Union Delegation to Pakistan

2008-2011: Deputy-Director General, International Affairs Directorate, Procurement Agency, Ministry of Defence, Paris

2005-2008: Ambassador of France to the Republic of Vanuatu

2002-2005: Director of the Cabinet, Cabinet of the Minister of State for War Veterans

1999-2002: First Counsellor, French Embassy in Singapore

1996-1999: Director, Asia-America-Africa, International Affairs Directorate, Procurement Agency, Ministry of Defence, Paris

1987-1996: Junior positions at the Ministry of Defence in Paris and Attaché for Defence equipment in the French Embassy in Tokyo (1990-1993)

At present, he is serving as the Head of Delegation, European Union Delegation to Bangladesh.



Welcome Address

**Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc,
Director General, BISS**

In his Welcome Address, Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc said that BISS provides platform to distinguished diplomats to speak on issues of common interest for Bangladesh and respective country. In the past, the institute organised country lectures on different countries namely Malaysia, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Indonesia, Russia, India, China, the United States, Brazil, Japan and Sweden. For wider dissemination of this lecture series, BISS published those speeches in a book form, with the consent of their Excellencies.

He stated that Bangladesh-EU relations could be traced back to 1973, when Bangladesh established formal diplomatic relations with the newly enlarged European Community. Negotiations were initiated with the Community in 1974, which culminated into the signing of a “Commercial Cooperation Agreement” and setting up of a Joint Commission on trade and economic cooperation in 1976. The Community established its Dhaka Office in 1982, initially under the South Asia Representative Office in New Delhi. Subsequently, the office was upgraded in 1988 to a full delegation. Since then, cooperation between these two evolved and reached a new level of partnership under the third generation EU-Bangladesh Co-operation Agreement in 2001, where the spectrum of co-operation was broadened to include a wide array of spheres, including support for sustainable economic and social development, aid for trade, governance, environment, science and technology, information, culture and communication, etc. He also mentioned that since the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, Bangladesh had to seek ODA to meet its development needs from different global sources. He added that after three years of setting up of Bangladesh Aid Group (BAG) now known as Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF), aid started to flow officially to Bangladesh from the sources. Many of BDF countries are EU countries. During the period 2007 to 2013, EU-Bangladesh relations were guided by the Country Strategy Paper for Bangladesh. Currently, for the period 2014-2020, Bangladesh-EU relations focused on three sectors, namely – strengthening democratic government, food and nutrition security, and education and skill development.

The Director General opined that ensuring an effective aid-development nexus is an important and critical aspect of any cooperation and Bangladesh-EU development partnership is no exception in this. Both Bangladesh and EU are working closely to increase economic and trade cooperation between them. In the case of economic cooperation, EU showed considerable preference for Bangladesh. Under EU’s Generalised System of Preference (GSP), namely the Everything but Arms (EBA) products originating in Bangladesh now enjoy duty and quota-free access to EU market. He said that at present, EU is the

single largest business partner of Bangladesh accounting for around 24 per cent of Bangladesh's total trade in 2015. It is one of the most important destinations of exports from Bangladesh. From 2008 to 2015, EU imports from Bangladesh almost trebled from €5,464 million to €15,145 million. Bangladesh now enjoys a significant trade surplus with the EU.

According to General Rahman, EU member states as a whole are currently the largest development partners of Bangladesh. When European Community cooperation with Bangladesh was established in 1973, it was primarily concerned with emergency humanitarian aid in view of Bangladesh's vulnerability to floods and cyclones. Since then, EU provided a substantial amount of humanitarian aid to help Bangladesh to manage emergency situations in different disasters. While humanitarian assistance continued to be an important part of EU aid to Bangladesh, delivered through the European Commission's Humanitarian Office (ECHO), the emphasis has now shifted on development cooperation in social services (health and education), trade promotion and private sector development, good governance, food security, environment, disaster risk reduction and climate change. He expressed satisfaction that the impacts achieved through EU-funded activities are a testament to the fruitfulness of the EU-Bangladesh partnership. Bangladesh is a beneficiary of a country-specific allocation under the EU's Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI). He emphasised on the fact that the country benefitted substantially from the EU's thematic budget lines for worldwide action in the fields of food security, promotion of human rights, reinforcement of non-state actors, climate change, empowerment of women and other policy priorities. The EU has also shown its interest to provide assistance to Bangladesh in combating terrorism and violent extremism.





Lecture by the Ambassador

H. E. Mr. Pierre Mayaudon

Ambassador Pierre Mayaudon started his lecture by informing that the EU will celebrate its 60th anniversary in March 2017. For an institution, 60 years is very young age and the EU is still growing. He said that someone might argue on the point that the EU is going through its midlife crisis. He also said that someone from Europe might raise questions about the EU model, but the EU is playing a stronger and wider role in helping to resolve many crises worldwide. For the last 3-4 years, EU as well as its different member states has been impacted by different crises which included those in Ukraine over Crimea, Syria, Afghanistan, migration and refugee crisis in Europe. Also, there was an economic crisis within the EU, especially in Greece. The EU has been in a difficult period, which is unprecedented and unexpected and probably that is why one of its member states-UK decided to quit from the EU. Of course, it is a big blow for the EU and a concern for Bangladesh because the UK is the 2nd largest economy of Europe and for Bangladesh's RMG export, it is the 3rd largest market.

The ambassador informed that the heads of state or government of the 27 EU members met in Bratislava to begin a political reflection on further development of an EU with 27 member countries. Leaders agreed on the Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap, which set out the objectives for the coming months. These objectives include restoring full control of the external borders, ensuring internal security and fighting terrorism, strengthening EU cooperation on external security and defence, boosting the single market and offering better opportunities for young Europeans, etc. The EU leaders agreed to meet again in Malta in January 2017. He mentioned that one of the important dimensions of the EU, it is driven not by interests but by values. In this regard, he said about the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan (the European Union and the government of Afghanistan co-hosted this conference on Afghanistan) that took place on 4-5 October 2016 which brought together 75 countries and 26 international organisations and agencies where participants endorsed the ambitious reform agenda presented by the Afghan government and undertook to ensure continued international political and financial support for Afghanistan over the next four years. "This is one of the examples how the EU is working for promoting global peace and stability and that is why it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012", he said.

Regarding the EU common market, the ambassador said that the European Single Market seeks to guarantee free movement of goods, capital, services, and people – the "four freedoms" – within the European Union (EU). It encompasses the EU's 28 member states and has been extended with exceptions to Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the Agreement on the European Economic

Area and to Switzerland through bilateral treaties. Currently, there are 500 million consumers within this common market system and it is benefitting the member countries as well as non-members. He also mentioned about the common currency (euro) and common visa system (Schengen visa) within the EU that also help to achieve prosperity.

He informed about the Lisbon Treaty, which helps to function the institution more actively. "The Treaty of Lisbon is an international agreement which amends the two treaties to form the constitutional basis of the European Union (EU). The Treaty of Lisbon was signed by the EU member states on 13 December 2007, and entered into force on 1 December 2009. Prominent changes in the treaty included the move from unanimity to qualified majority voting in at least 45 policy areas in the Council of Ministers and the election procedure as well as the tenure of the President of the European Council. Appointments to the highest position within the Council of the European Union are done via a rotating presidency system – representatives from the European Union came together to draft a list of the order in which Member States would produce the President of the Council of the European Union. One Member State of the European Union used to hold the position of the Head of the Council of the European Union for a period of 6 months, after which the position is transferred to the next Member State. Following the suggestion of multiple delegates during the drafting of the Lisbon Treaty, it was agreed that there should be a formal authority at the head of the European Council. This change was meant to be monumental as the term of the presidency of the EC was set at 2 and a half years and the president's responsibilities were outlined within the Lisbon Treaty and it is helping to strengthen the role of the EC President," he mentioned.

He also focused about two main components of the EU - Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). "The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is the organised and agreed foreign policy of the EU for mainly security and defence diplomacy and actions. CFSP deals only with a specific part of the EU's external relations, which include mainly Trade and Commercial Policy and other areas such as funding to third countries, etc. Decisions require unanimity among member states in the Council of the European Union, but once agreed, certain aspects can be further decided by qualified majority voting," he said. "On the other hand, as part of the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) cover the Union's military operations and civilian missions. The CSDP provides the policy framework for a number of permanent political and military structures and for operations abroad. The policy was incorporated into the EU Treaties in 1999. Currently, the EU is conducting 17 CSDP operations, 11 civilian operations and 6 military operations. In Afghanistan, the EU has 500-700 security officials who are providing training to Afghan National Police personnel. Also, it includes the naval operation and the latest one is named as Operation Sophia that intends to tackle the refugee crisis by military means to save thousands of lives in the Mediterranean," he informed. Talking about the EU Global Strategy, he opined this new foreign and security policy would leave no one behind as well as take current global challenges — such as migration, climate change, terrorism and slow economic growth.

While speaking on EU-Bangladesh Partnership, the ambassador said that the EU is the number one partner of Bangladesh in terms of trade, development and humanitarian cooperation. In terms of development support, the EU provides €0.5 billion grants to Bangladesh every year. There are different projects of European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) in Bangladesh to support the Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar and disaster victims in coastal areas. Regarding trade, he mentioned

about two components, namely - Generalised System of Preference (GSP) and Everything but Arms (EBA) grant duty free access to all exports, except arms and ammunition facilities, which were provided by the EU to all 49 LDCs. These two schemes had really been helping Bangladesh to flourish its RMG sector, which employed nearly 4 million people of whom 80 per cent are women. "Among the 49 LDCs, only Bangladesh has been able to take the full opportunities of these trade facilities and the dynamic and vibrant entrepreneurs of Bangladesh have made it possible," he mentioned. In this connection, he also talked about the dilemma of the EU in the time of the Rana Plaza Collapse (24 April 2013) because the EU was confused at that time whether it should continue to provide GSP or not. "But ultimately we with other countries have decided to continue the support and for improving the safety of the industries a Sustainable Compact has been formed," he said. The Compact brings together the European Union (EU), Bangladesh, the US and the ILO accompanied by employers, trade unions and other key stakeholders with the common goal of improving working conditions and the respect of labour rights in Bangladesh's readymade garment (RMG) industry to ensure that the Rana Plaza tragedy would not be repeated. To do this, the Compact builds upon the National Tripartite Plan of Action (NTPA) on short and long term commitments related to three interlinked pillars: 1) respect for labour rights; 2) structural integrity of buildings and occupational safety and health; and 3) responsible business conduct.

Mr. Mayaudon also talked on Bangladesh's Vision 2021 to graduate from lower middle income country to middle income country. In this regard, he informed the EU plan to provide financial assistance (as grants) to Bangladesh with an amount of €700 million from 2014-2020. Each year, €100 million will be disbursed for the development of three sectors- a) Education and Skill Development, b) Nutrition and Food Security, and c) Strengthening Democratic Governance. Bangladesh is the second country in the Asia-Pacific region to receive such assistance after Afghanistan. Regarding the apprehension of losing GSP and EBA facilities after 2021, he said, "Bangladesh will lose EBA or duty-free market access once it turns into a middle-income country. But this won't happen overnight, because there will be a transition period of three years during which Bangladesh can prepare to apply for GSP Plus benefit which is as good as the EBA. To avail the GSP Plus benefit, Bangladesh has to be eligible by signing and ratifying 27 International Conventions related to human rights, labour rights, good governance and environment."

On Horizon 2020, he said that it is the biggest EU Research and Innovation programme ever with nearly €80 billion of funding available over 7 years—2014 to 2020 which promises more breakthroughs, discoveries and world-firsts by taking great ideas from the lab to the market. "I am sure that Bangladeshi universities, think tanks, companies, farms, official departments and even individual can apply to be benefited from this programme," he added. The ambassador also mentioned about the collaboration of the EU in the education sector (Erasmus Mundus Programme) and space technology development (Copernicus is the world's largest single earth observation programme and directed by the European Commission in partnership with the European Space Agency). In this connection, he suggested that if Bangladesh could join in this programme, it would be benefitted by developing the capacity of its national space research organisation, Bangladesh Space Research and Remote Sensing Organization (SPARRSO).

The ambassador appreciated the measures taken by the Bangladesh government to implement the ideas of 'Digital Bangladesh' and 'Blue Economy'. He admitted that when The Bangabandhu-1 satellite would be fully functional (it is scheduled to be launched in December 2017), it would not only help Bangladesh but also the whole region. Speaking on blue economy, he said that in Europe, the concept

was known as Blue Growth and the EU is working with Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Bangladesh for enhancing the skills of Bangladeshis in this sector. Regarding migration, the EU is working with Bangladesh for better migration management and help Bangladeshis migrate to Europe through proper and legal channel.

He said that both Bangladesh and the EU are facing the same challenges to some extent in terms of climate change and terrorism. In implementing its every project, the EU is working to lessen the vulnerabilities of climate change. For combating violent extremism and radicalisation, Bangladesh is being supported through the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF). As a public-private partnership, GCERF was established to serve as the first global effort to support local, community-level initiatives aimed at strengthening resilience against violent extremist agendas. Operating at the nexus of security and development, GCERF is committed to work in partnership and consultation with governments, civil society and the private sector in beneficiary countries to support national strategies to address the local drivers of violent extremism.

Open Discussion



Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc, Director General, BIISS wanted to know whether Brexit would have an impact on Bangladesh-European Union relations in the future.

Major General (retd.) A M S A Amin, ndc, psc said that the EU has risks to be a victim of terrorism; especially France, Belgium

and other countries. Did the EU develop any specific strategy or long term plan of action to deal with this phenomenon? He also focused on the expansion of terrorism by publication of Cartoon in *Charlie Hebdo* and colonial past of France in North Africa. All these



things were contributing to the issues of Islamic Jihad.



Ambassador Shamsheer M. Chowdhury, BB asked what it meant by transition of Bangladesh from EBA to GSP Plus. Which other Asian countries are in this GSP Plus group and how did they manage it in terms of relation with Bangladesh and the EU on trade issues regarding the internal dynamics of the EU itself?

Ambassador Dr. Afsarul Qader opined that the EU as an economic and political entity is in an embryonic state still forming and sorting out various complex issues. It is donating aids to Bangladesh annually; whether this is coming from or the member states of EU. Who are the planners and deliverers of this aid?

H. E. Mr. Benoît-Pierre Laramée, High Commissioner of Canada to Bangladesh, wanted to know about the development of the trade policy in Europe. They has different trade policies. This would affect international trade vision and future of Bangladesh.





Dr. Sazzad Haider, International Affairs Secretary, Bangladesh Awami Jubo League, wanted to know about Brexit and in this regard whether there could be any problem in trade relation between EU and Bangladesh?

Mr. Humayun Kabir Bhuiyan, special correspondent, *The Independent*, asked about two issues. First, he mentioned that when Bangladesh would elevate

from LDC to Middle Income country, then it would automatically lose GSP status. Thus, he wanted to know where Bangladesh stood to avail GSP Plus facility because it would need to sign 27 conventions related to human rights and good governance. Secondly, he asked that as the UK was in the process to leave the EU, how would that impact the funding of the EU towards



Bangladesh as UK is the 2nd highest contributor of the overall funding?



Dr. M. Enamul Huq, former Inspector General of Police, made an observation of current global migration movement and the subsequent crisis in Europe. He mentioned about the positive role of German Chancellor Angela Merkel in managing the crisis as well as expressed his deep concern over the issue. He requested the Ambassador to express his opinion in this regard.

Ambassador Muhammad Zamir, former Chief Information Commissioner, mentioned about three issues. First, he said that Bangladesh learnt a lot from Europe about the non-navigational uses of International watercourses and in this aspect, the EU can play a proactive role to engage in solving the water management and sharing problem in South Asia. Secondly, he opined that though Bangladesh has been supported by Germany in developing its renewable energy, but the role of the EU is much needed here. Thirdly, he mentioned about the role of the agro-processing sector of Bangladesh that might help facilitate micro entrepreneurship, especially in rural areas of Bangladesh and the EU could provide support to this sector.



Maj Gen (retd) Mohammad Ashab Uddin asked how the EU can help Bangladesh especially in terms of climate change and disaster management because Bangladesh is exposed as one of the most disaster prone countries due to climate change.



Dr. A. Atiq Rahman, Executive Director, Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS) opined that the main challenge for some institutions of Bangladesh is their relatively poor absorption capacity with the projects of the EU especially Horizon 2020. Another challenge in Bangladesh is the quality of education and for that, the quality higher education must be enhanced. He suggested that it would be helpful for Bangladesh if any mechanism can be developed to enhance the absorption capacity of the institutions in Bangladesh.

Mr. Sheikh Shahariar Zaman, special correspondent, *The Bangla Tribune* asked the ambassador about two issues. First, he mentioned there was a dedicated EU Fund of US \$200 million for the development of RMG sector and the interest rate was 1-2 per cent. But owners of RMG factories in Bangladesh are getting the fund at an interest rate of 9-10 per cent. Therefore, he wanted to know the latest development in this regard as the discussion was going on between the EU and Bangladesh government to lower the rate. Secondly, he asked him about his perception regarding the current security situation of Bangladesh as the government has taken several steps to strengthen the overall security condition of the country with special attention to the diplomatic zones.





Response by the Ambassador

In response to questions and comments, Ambassador Pierre Mayaudon said that EU has accepted but regretted the outcome of this referendum in regards to Brexit. It has no consequences for Bangladesh. The country can make business as usual. United Kingdom also bears great importance for Bangladesh as a single market. The EU is encouraging counterterrorism strategies and actions as a soft power. It is also encouraging member states to take actions against terrorism and radicalisation. Currently, the GSP Plus is a new regime. There is a group of nine countries applied for GSP Plus. The countries can get the approval of GSP after fulfilling the required conditions determined by the convention. For instance, Sri Lanka once lost the GSP facility but it regained by fulfilling the required conditions.

Answering the question of the EU Fund of US \$200 million for development of the RMG sector, the Ambassador mentioned that the fund is not an EU fund rather a global fund. The discussion is going on for ensuring soft loan facilities for the garments factory owners; the government of Bangladesh, the central bank and commercial banks of Bangladesh are working in this regard.

Mr. Mayaudon said that there are several projects of the EU working to reduce vulnerabilities of the people of coastal areas in Bangladesh. In response to the issue of support for renewable energy sector development in Bangladesh, he said that the EU did not have any project for this, but different member states of the EU are working on it in Bangladesh. Regarding Horizon 2020, he said that the main objective of the programme is to focus on collaborative research and innovation, not capacity building. "By coupling research and innovation, Horizon 2020 is helping to achieve this with its emphasis on excellent science, industrial leadership and tackling societal challenges and Bangladesh will be benefitted from it", he added.

Responding to the issue of water management, he said that it is vital for Bangladesh being a land of 300 rivers and 100 years ago, nearly 90 per cent of the total people and goods traveled through waterways. He also mentioned that as countries of Europe has both skill and experience to better manage the inland water system, there might be a dialogue between the EU and Bangladesh for developing its inland water management system. Speaking about regional cooperation in water sharing and management in South Asia, the ambassador suggested that BBIN can be a breakthrough in this regard.

While responding to the question of current irregular migration movement towards Europe, he said that Germany is facing the influx most. Also, other members of the EU are facing the problem. It is common to have mixed feelings among citizens of EU about refugees and mixed reactions have been

shown by the citizens of Germany and Hungary through elections and referendum on this point. “But the EU is too liberal and too welcoming for the migrants and we are working closely and collectively to better manage the crisis”, he added.

Answering to the question whether Bangladesh is currently eligible to avail GSP Plus, he said that the country is not currently ready to avail GSP Plus facility because to get the facility, it would have to sign and ratify 27 International Conventions for which it is not ready. “When Bangladesh will be fully prepared then it could apply for this”, he also said. “Bangladesh will lose EBA or duty-free market access once it turns into a middle-income country. But this won’t happen overnight,” Ambassador Mayaudon assured there would be a transition period of three years during which Bangladesh can prepare to apply for GSP Plus benefit which is as good as the EBA. Responding to another question, he said that when the UK would leave the EU, it would obviously have an impact in terms of resources coming from the the member states. He, however, said that the EU has their own resources and also needed to benefit from member states’ resources.

When speaking about the current security situation in Bangladesh, Mr. Mayaudon said, “this is a shared objective and by mobilising all our resources, we will certainly reach it. But it will take some time.” He acknowledged the efforts being made by police, law enforcement agencies and others to strengthen the security situation of Bangladesh.



Concluding Remarks

Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad

Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS

In summing up the session, the Chair stated that Bangladesh's relations with the European Union and its member states remained a high-priority in its foreign policy. At present, EU is the top export destination of Bangladesh's products (52.2 per cent of total exports) as well as an important source of capital imports including technology. He mentioned that the EU extended GSP facilities with concessions on rules of origin requirements to Bangladesh which has been a boon for the country's trade with the bloc. Its importance for Bangladesh stemmed both from the bloc's economic strength as a global player and also from its prominence as a development partner. Besides, the EU continued to assist Bangladesh in human resources development. According to him, EU has been keenly interested in promoting good governance in Bangladesh. There are several cooperation initiatives enabling Bangladeshi students and scholars to pursue higher studies in EU nations; the prestigious Erasmus Mundus scholarship programme is one of those. Recently (in February 2015), the EU Business Council was launched in Dhaka with a view to promoting and facilitating trade and investment between the EU and Bangladesh. The combination of EU's substantial investments in Bangladesh and development assistance significantly contributed to Bangladesh's economic growth and its achievements in reaching development goals.

He added that EU's Horizon 2020 provided efficient, joint financing guidelines for the bloc's investments in research, development and innovation. Its focal areas included ICT, biotechnology, funding of SMEs, health, food-water-forestry-bio economy, energy, transport, environment including climate change adaptation, etc. EU assistance in transport sector, new technologies for infrastructure building; desalination of seawater; river system management and embankment/dams in coastal areas; affordable technologies for clean and efficient energy etc. can play critical role in achieving Bangladesh's Vision 2021 and Vision 2041. European ICT companies can exploit the growing Bangladeshi market and profitably outsource some of their operations, production and R&D to Bangladesh. In March 2011, the European Development Cooperation (EDC) published a report titled "*Climate Finance in Bangladesh: Lessons for Development Cooperation and Climate Finance at National Level*". Climate change negotiations, mitigation and adaptation, are also important areas of cooperation between Bangladesh and the EU which could be further intensified.

Ambassador Ahmad opined that the migration/refugee crisis (particularly that in Europe), has been a very worrying issue worldwide. Bangladesh also faced this problem. However, this can be an area of cooperation between the two parties. Here, the first Bangladesh-EU Dialogue on Migration Management held on 05 April 2016 at Dhaka can be mentioned which focused on the entire spectrum of migration and mobility including global migration situation, Global Forum on Migration and

Development (GFMD), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in relation to migration, irregular migration and trafficking. The dialogue also explored possibilities of wider cooperation on migration and mobility through a possible comprehensive political declaration focusing on safe, orderly and regular migration.

Another area of EU-Bangladesh partnership is the 2014-2020 Geographical Bilateral Development Cooperation—Multiannual Indicative Programme with a budget of €690 million. It will provide critical support to Bangladesh's development strategies and policies. It focused on three sectors: i) Strengthening Democratic Governance, ii) Food and Nutrition security, iii) Education and Skills Development. From 2016 onward, EU aid will be synchronised with Bangladesh's 7th 5-Year Plan 2016-2020 aligning with the EU+ joint programming process and interested EU member states.

According to him, bilateral relations are subject to various transformations. Bangladesh-EU relations are no exception. While Bangladesh is having good relations and keeping efforts up for developing these further, there are areas of disagreement requiring dedicated and patient consultations for finding win-win solutions. The spread of militancy and recent terrorist attacks in Bangladesh justifiably worried EU friends. Yet, Bangladesh is much more concerned as it threatened everything the country stood for. Therefore, the government adopted a zero-tolerance policy on militancy and terrorism, committed to providing security for everyone, including friends from abroad to the best of its ability. At the end of his speech, he shared the optimism of Ambassador Mayaudon and believed that despite all challenges, Bangladesh-EU relations will only grow in the days ahead.

Country Lecture on

France: Its Challenges and Foreign Policy



Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) organised its 15th Country Lecture on "France: Its challenges and Foreign Policy" on 13 April 2017 at BISS auditorium. The lecture was delivered by H. E. Mrs. Sophie Aubert, Ambassador of France to Bangladesh. The Ambassador talked about various challenges France is facing both on domestic and foreign policy fronts.

The lecture was chaired by Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc, Director General, BISS. The top brass of the armed forces, members of the academia, officials from law enforcement agencies, policymakers, current government officials, members of the diplomatic corps, representatives from development partner organisations and media were present on the occasion and participated in the open discussion session.



Biography of

H.E. Mrs. Sophie Aubert

Ambassador, Embassy of France in Bangladesh

Ambassador Mrs. Sophie Aubert was born on 28 September 1967. She has degrees from the Lyon Institute of Political Science (Sciences Po Lyon) and the French Institute of Eastern Languages and Civilisations (INALCO, Mediterranean Studies). She has also university degrees in contemporary Arab world and modern Arabic degree from the French School of Press Officers (EFAP).

Ambassador Aubert has been serving as Ambassador of France in Bangladesh since November 2014. Prior to that, she was the Head of the Stabilisation Mission of the Crisis Center, from 2012 to 2014. She was posted as First Counsellor in French Embassy in Conakry between 2009 -2012. Earlier, she served as Deputy Consul General in Sao Paulo from 2002 to 2005. In her career as a diplomat, she assumed the post of Second Secretary at the French embassy in Lima between 1999-2002. Besides, she assumed the post of Third Secretary at the French embassy in Damascus from 1998 to 1999. She has worked as Desk officer for Eastern Africa from 1995 to 1997.

She speaks Arabic, English and Spanish.



Welcome Address

Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc,
Director General, BISS

Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc, Director General, BISS, in his address greeted all for Bengali New Year. He said that Bengali people all around the world would celebrate the most colourful and festive event of the Bengali calendar, the first day of the Bengali New Year. He also said that BISS has been regularly organising country lectures with a view to enriching the understanding about countries with which Bangladesh has significant bilateral relations. In the recent past, BISS organised country lectures on Malaysia, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Indonesia, Russia, India, China, the United States, Brazil, Japan, Sweden and the European Union. For wider dissemination of this lecture series, BISS published those speeches in a book form, with the consent of their Excellencies. In line with this, BISS organised a country lecture on *"France: Its Challenges and Foreign Policy"* now which will be delivered by H. E. Mrs Sophie Aubert, Ambassador, Embassy of France in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh and France enjoyed warm and friendly relations based on mutual trust and respect since Bangladesh's independence. Over the years, the relations between the two nations flourished and reached a matured stage. The state of warm relation reflected in the growing bilateral cooperation covering a wide range of sectors that included trade and commerce, tourism, culture, scientific and technical cooperation, and people-to-people contact.

The relationship between Bangladesh and France can be traced back to the 17th century, when the French first came to the Indian subcontinent for doing business. They maintained trading posts in Dhaka and other major cities. Right after the liberation war, France was quick to recognise Bangladesh within months of its independence on 14 February 1972. On 17 March 1972, Bangladesh opened its resident diplomatic mission in Paris. Bilateral relations between these two enjoyed a boost in the late 1980s and early 1990s following the visit by French President Mitterrand in 1990 and French proposals for a flood prevention programme. Bangladesh's Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also visited France in 1999. Throughout the last decades, the two countries exchanged many high level official visits to maintain close relationship.

In trade and business sector, the relationship between Bangladesh and France is also very important. France remains a major partner of Bangladesh within the European Union (EU) and currently funding various projects led by the EU. It also directly supported infrastructure development projects in Bangladesh through the French Development Agency (AFD). In 2015, trade between France and Bangladesh increased by 30 per cent compared to 2014 and reached € 2.4 billion. France's import from Bangladesh largely included clothing. Additionally, Bangladesh also exported other products such

as leather and footwear, shrimps and frozen fish, ceramic and pharmaceutical articles. Bangladesh's import from France included spare parts for aircraft and vessels, alcoholic beverages, chemicals, food stuff etc.

Bangladesh and France are committed to boost the exchange of cultural activities and signed a cultural cooperation agreement on 10 March 1987. France relies in particular on two of its cultural centres known as *Alliances Françaises* in Chittagong and Dhaka. Those centres work on developing the cultural ties between both countries by sponsoring local and French cultural activities. In the case of people-to-people contact, cooperation between Bangladesh and France is particularly strong. The people of France spontaneously came forward, under the leadership of the renowned French thinker and philosopher Mr. André Malraux, to mobilise international public opinion in support of Liberation War in 1971. According to the most recent French government statistics, there are about 12,000 Bangladeshis residing in France.

France is also deeply involved with various social and humanitarian activities in Bangladesh. French NGOs run various programmes to help underprivileged people in various area of the country.

In spite of the warm relations, there are great scope for Bangladesh and France to expand the mutual cooperation and elevate the bilateral relation to a new height. Apart from the economic and cultural partnership, both countries can take initiatives to strengthen cooperation in other areas like fighting terrorism and violent extremism, ensuring clean and renewable energy, environmental protection, etc. It is pertinent to mention that terrorism and violent extremism, which is now a global threat, is also a severe problem for both France and Bangladesh. Thus, both countries can increase cooperation in countering terrorism and violent extremism. France and Bangladesh can also join hands in combating global warming, climate change and preservation of ecology and the environment. France is one of the notable contributors to Green Climate Fund and can assist Bangladesh in its course of action in climate change adaptation and mitigation.

He expressed high expectation of continuing this relation. At the end, he thanked all for their presence in the lecture.



Lecture by the Ambassador

H. E. Mrs. Sophie Aubert

H. E. Mrs. Sophie Aubert, Ambassador, Embassy of France in Bangladesh thanked BISS for giving her the opportunity to talk about her country. She stated that she would share information to better understand her country and discuss the challenges France is facing both in domestic and foreign policy issues. She discussed France from a global perspective, and then talked about present France, which included the issue of identity and a socio-economic model of France. In conclusion, she described France's international policy and challenges.

She argued that to understand France from a global perspective, it is important to understand the history which created the main characteristics of present France. She said that France is a very old country with a complex history. They are an old nation because the history of France started before the Christ era. In fact, the birth of the country was the result of the European history and the movement of its people. The country faced first invasion by the Romans coming from the south. They occupied France for almost 500 years. Then the barbarians invaded France. Clovis, one of the barbarian leaders, became the king of the country. He married a Christian girl and converted to Christianity. That is the foundation of Christianity in France. The reign of Clovis is a turning point in European history on two counts: his establishment of the first great barbarian kingdom in the north of the Alps; and his adoption of Roman Catholic Christianity. French Revolution is another significant event in the history of France. She stated that France is an old country of two thousand years old complex history and this history created the foundation of the nation.

Ambassador Aubert described the main characteristics of France. One of the characteristics of France is its universal dimension. France expanded its empire in the 19th century. As a heritage of this expansion, France now has the second largest maritime territory in the world. The French language was for centuries a language of diplomacy. It is still the third most spoken language in the world after English and Mandarin (Chinese). France's heritage and identity are made of its teachers, writers, painters, museums, philosophers and scientists. All of them contributed to the progress and evolution of ideals in the world. The second characteristic of the country is how the French see themselves. The French people consider that they are the historic cradle of secularism-'*Laïcité*'. After centuries of absolute monarchy, they believed that the king is descending his legitimacy from God. But, the revolution raised the spirit in 1789 and the state and churches were fully separated.

Then she talked about present France. She said that France is a country of 66 million inhabitants. They have the territory of more than five hundred thousand square kilometres of metropolitan territory and

almost seven hundred thousand square kilometers of overseas territories. It means that France's territory is more than three times of Bangladesh and its population is three times less that of Bangladesh. Their GDP is around two thousand and two hundred billion euro. It is slowly increasing 1.2 per cent in 2016 and the economy was destabilised by the 2008 crisis but now is globally recovering. France's economy is today the fifth largest in the world behind the US, China, Japan and Germany, all of whom have a bigger population than France. France's economic partners are mainly western European countries, the US and China. She further stated that France presently is leading an important transition. Then she addressed two issues: French identity and economic model.

Regarding identity, the ambassador said that out of the 66 million inhabitants in France, there are 04 million people who are foreigners, which is 6.4 per cent of the whole population. In France, there is a huge debate on immigration. The official figure says that every year, around 200,000 immigrants enter France, which is a very small percentage of the population. But considering the last two generations, the population which is of foreign origin is almost 20 per cent of the total population of France. Thus, in France, the issue of French identity is a sensitive one. The country is changing and therefore, they think they must find out new references to define their identity as a nation. Today, France has a huge debate related to its roots. She elaborated that France is a secular country, but at the same time, it is also a Christian country. France must be very careful about the misuse and manipulation of religion as a political lever. The best way to preserve the French identity is preserving the secular system. This would be the only way to make sure that the integration of the population in France would remain possible.

The second question was regarding the economic model. France is a country of strong economy because it produces welfare for the benefit of the world population. In France, the system is based on solidarity which means the people will have their waiver to accumulate and contribute to help who does not have enough. The problem is, this system is not sustainable if enough people would not create value. That is the reason the French authority is facing challenges to elaborate a new model ensuring the creation of more values to preserve their system. Therefore, even if a country is achieving a high degree of development, still there are many fields where improvement of action and creating more values would be needed. Of course, France must expand its presence abroad beyond its borders. But it also has many fields to develop inside the country. For example, it could work on developing its education system, encouraging investment and creating more job and growth. She argued that France must transform its society. This already started in there because they would have to create a new economic model based on preservation of their environment. Hence, the transformation of its model had become its global challenge.

Then, she presented some of the main issues related to French foreign policy. She stated that the Middle East and part of North Africa are now destabilised. Even the EU is also destabilised as there was a war in Ukraine. The US president's policy seemed to be quite unpredictable and North Korea is not also transparent. Thus, in this changing world, France is a middle type country with global responsibilities. It is a nuclear power country and a permanent member of the Security Council of the United Nations. France is also a founding member of the EU. It holds values it wants to develop and share.

French foreign policy is very much linked to the national defence strategy. Nuclear weapons are fundamental to French national defence policy. This is the heritage of fourth republic, which has been consolidated and developed by the fifth republic. The doctrine of nuclear deterrence guides French national defence strategy.

The main priorities of France's foreign policy can be summarised as follows. First, there is a need to address the challenge of instability and insecurity to protect the territory and France's citizens all over the world. Second, France must address the challenge of economic growth and stabilisation by sorting out a solution to avoid crisis like the 2008 crisis. The third priority will be to support democracy and democratic transition all over the world. And, the fourth priority will be to face the European challenge by defining clear priorities for the domestic and international policy implemented by the European Union. The ambassador elaborated some of these main challenges France is facing today: the European challenge, *Jihadist* challenge and cyberspace challenge.

Ambassador Aubert said that France is a European country and one of the six founding countries of the European Union. The EU was created through the Treaty of Rome 60 years ago. Europe started to develop in the first part of the 19th century and the French writer Victor Hugo was dreaming of a Europe becoming the United States of Europe. After WW II, the idea was floated that to eliminate the possibility of a war in Europe, France and Germany has to be linked in things which were strategically vital for both. The result of this idea is the European Community for Coal and Steel. A treaty was signed in 1951. During the last 70 years, France had been fully committed to the construction of European institutions. Today the EU is made of 28 European countries minus one: the United Kingdom.

Then she discussed about the French position regarding Europe. After the collapse of the Berlin Wall and Soviet Union, the situation in Europe became unstable. The condition in Europe was that EU should include new countries of Eastern Europe under its influence. The US made at that time a lot of pressure in order to include these countries into NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). Therefore, countries like Poland, for example, became a member of the EU and NATO after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Berlin Wall. Nevertheless, France believed that the EU needed a strategic approach to the world, its environment and that they must have a policy toward European countries, Russia, US, Turkey and China. The country is pushing for it. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the integration of countries formerly under Russian influence in the EU or NATO institutions was perceived as a vital threat for the new Russia. Therefore, what happened with Crimea and what happened in Ukraine was not much of a surprise.

She said that in France, the huge majority of people would want a European Union respectful for the state and the citizens. This meant the EU should not be given authority to interfere in the national issue. She thought that they must develop a Europe based on defence. She said, "In France, we have the conviction that we are protecting Europe from many threats outside, but sometimes there is a little bit room. So, we consider facing the *Jihadist* threat is the way to protect Europe, and France". According to her, the Euro system is fundamental and must be consolidated. Also, they must increase the level of protection of the Schengen border.

Speaking of the *jihadist* threat, she said that it was very unfortunate that France has to be the victim of terrorist attacks against *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris in 2015. *Jihadist* issue is very important in France. The country is on the frontline in Europe to face the growing violent *Salafi* movement called as *jihadism*. *Jihadism* is a *Salafi* approach to Islam, promoting an authoritarian and intolerant vision of the world. In addition, they are the militants who claim that they must eliminate whoever is different or think differently. They want to establish *Sharia* rule all over the world which France does not want. *Jihadists* hate the western world, its development model and hate the idea of democracy.

Finally, the Ambassador came up with the question: why would the militants want to destroy them?

Here, she said that they must recognise it is difficult to ignore the feeling of Muslimhood considering the West always defended Israel against Palestine. For long, people of Palestine are deprived of their right to get access to state and citizenship. The West must think about it and understand this feeling of being disregarded. The war against Iraq also contributed to this feeling. The *Daesh* or Islamic State (IS) integrated a huge number of militants from Saddam Hossain's regime who were pushed out of the system by the new Iraqi power under the influence of the coalition led by the Americans. She said that *ihadists* hated the western world seeing them as enemies of Islam, which should be considered and not be ignored. It should also to be considered the way the *Jihadists* were expanding. She also said that the world is going through a very fundamental transition and the models are globally at stake. It is because the extremists reject the world and its model both at the global and individual level. As for France, it is one of the important targets because it is a secular country and fighting to stop the influence of *Daesh* and its terror attacks. France is at war with this *ihadist* movement outside the country such as in Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Sahara; in the Middle East - in Iraq and Syria and in North Africa - in Libya. The French priority will be to do whatever is possible to restore stability in these areas. It means to eliminate the *ihadist* threat. Its mission would be to support the partners of France against terrorist groups and contribute to avoid the constitution of new terrorist entities in this region. Four thousand soldiers from the French army posted mainly in N'Djamena. The Special Forces are also present in the Middle East who are part of International Forces against *Daesh*.

Ambassador Aubert continued that in 2015, after the three terrorist attacks in France, the government took a national plan of action in this regard. There are 1,700 French citizens are fighting for *Daesh* in Syria and Iraq. She also anticipated about their coming back to France. It is very clear that some French citizens happened to consider that the world they are living in, did not give them what they deserved. Around 12,000 people in France are considered and registered as "radicalised" people; among them at least 2,000 will be considered as "extremely dangerous".

The debate in France is how much it would be possible to act against the people causing destruction for the country. France is facing an immense emergency for more than two years and has been adapted to face terrorist challenges. She said that forces in her country, such as the police forces, intelligence forces have been mobilised to face all these threats. These moves started in 2012, when a law in France authorised their justice to judge French citizens involved in terror actions out of France. In last year, the country adopted a new action plan to fight radicalisation and terrorism, better adapted to the nature and intensity of the threat it was facing nowadays.

Then she discussed about the cyberspace, which is an important issue of France's foreign policy. Cyber security is a big issue as people are now interconnected globally. She mentioned that the global population is now 7.7 billion and half of them (almost 3.7 billion) use internet. Out of them, 2.2 billion use social network, more than 1.9 billion are active on the internet on their smart phones, 1.5 billion people use Facebook and the figures are increasing. Thus, the new dematerialised world became a threat to the institutions and people at all levels. One of the characteristics of this dematerialised world is there is no border. In France, it took time to understand this evolution to develop awareness and set a consistency to fight with new threat, but the problem is, the awareness remains slow and will take time. In fact, the world has to deal with a new generation of transnational criminals since security threats are exploited by these cyber criminals. As France is a part of this system, it is also exposed to these threats. Cyber crime has been taken very seriously in France's foreign policy. Then she gave examples of some cyber attacks, for example, attack in Estonia in 2006. Estonia is the most internet

friendly country. It faced a breakdown on 9 May 2006 which was a huge cyber attack on websites of the country. Some experts opined this was an attack from Russia as Estonia wanted to join the EU at that time. She then referred to the public information attack to the Iranian authority some years ago, which led to the destruction to thousands of enriched Uranium extractor. According to the New York Times, it was done by the US. Besides, there were some major attacks on Middle Eastern countries in 2011 and 2012 of new generations of viruses. The attacks were a consequence of a malware named "Flame" which had the mission to steal database and erase them. Nobody is 100 per cent sure who or which country was behind this attack. Hence, this issue is addressed in an international manner, but the level of international cooperation is still too low.

At the international level, there prevailed three conceptions of the cyber security: the so-called liberal countries consider that the internet is a free space but freedom must be preserved. Other countries, like Russia and China imposed huge rules and regulations to increase the level of security of the information system. Finally, the third group of countries like France and others who are in favour of cyberspace governance and some regulatory rules but which disapproves restriction for use in cyber space. Many institutions started working on this issue such as the UN Telecommunications Union, NATO, and France. France is giving training some specific military and civilian specialists on this issue. But they consider that it is difficult to develop a common approach to this issue for different reasons. The most important reason is lack of confidence. States consider they need to protect the amount of variety, cannot allow them to cooperate in order to set up strategies and protect themselves on cyberspace. Nevertheless, the French position is to find a way to cooperate in this issue.

In conclusion, the ambassador said that France has a long history, which intensely contributed to the development of the world and ideas. But the country is now facing different challenges both domestically and globally because of new technologies and digitalisation. It is also facing an ideological threat. The ambassador is confident the French will overcome the *jihadist* threat, even though they had a hard time and also new challenges to face. France has always been able to overcome the challenges and become more confident and stronger, having the respect of the motto of liberty, equality and fraternity. This will, she believes, guide them to a better future.

Open Discussion



Ambassador Mahmood Hasan asked a question about upcoming election in France. He talked about Marine Le Pen, French National Front (FN) political party leader and candidate for the French 2017 presidential election. He asked the Ambassador, if Le Pen would win, then what would be the future of the EU.

Dr. Syed Anwar Husain, supernumerary professor, Department of History, University of Dhaka mentioned a saying which was thought about France back in the 16th century. That is, "When France sneezes, Europe catches cold."

This metaphor summed up the dominant characteristic of France during 16th and 17th centuries. This saying speaks volume about the King's position that France had at that time. His question was why and how, through what historical process France had lost its key position in Europe.

Then he referred to former French President Charles de Gaulle, who considered UK's membership of the EEC to be a "Trojan Horse". Gaulle never wanted Britain in European Union. He asked whether keeping away Britain from the EU would be good for France or not.



Ambassador Dr. Afsarul Qader requested to enlighten the audience on liberty, equality and fraternity issue. He said that most of the people of the world at

one time wanted freedom. For that purpose, all are looking towards France for its intellectual leadership. But France's role in that regard created some contradictions. On freedom issue, France's record in its former colonies' independence was not inspiring. According to him, France's interference in killing of Gaddafi was also unfortunate. Regarding France's nuclear policy, he argued the policy was much criticised. He asked, 'Why does France develop nuclear weapons in the name of its security concerns?' Moreover, Israel's nuclear reactor 'Dimona' was constructed with the help of France. He requested the Ambassador to elucidate these matters if possible.



Ambassador M. Shafiullah remembered the contribution of former French minister of culture André Malraux during the war of independence of Bangladesh. The government of Bangladesh honoured him with a grand reception in 1973.



Later, he talked about 25th March, the national Genocide Day of Bangladesh. He asked whether Bangladesh would expect the support of France in declaring 25th March as International Genocide day.

Shamsher Mubin Chowdhury, BB, former foreign secretary of Bangladesh, said that the Dean of Diplomatic Core in France is an automatic job for the Ambassador of the holy city of the Vatican. He asked, 'is this compatible with the declared policy of secularism of France?' He argued that the Vatican represents the most theological state in the world.

With regard to the upcoming election in France, he referred that *the New York Times* carried a story on French Election where they were not calling the election between 'either' 'or', but as 'neither' 'nor'. Because, both leaders appeared to move away from their ideological base.

On *jihadist* issue, he gave the example of an attack on the bus of the football team of Monaco at in Dortmund. The People of Dortmund opened their doors for the Monaco team, which was a sign of good gesture and united the people. He criticised political leaders of France in this regard who relied so much on populism and according to him, it could be counterproductive.



Sohel Ahmed Choudhury, former commerce secretary of Bangladesh, asked about the economic relation between Bangladesh and France. France is the fifth largest economy. But he said there is little presence of France in Bangladesh regarding trade facilities and investment.

On *jihadist* issue, he asked whether the course of action of ex-President Nicolas Sarkozy would increase the tension among *jihadists* regarding the policy towards Islam and Islamic world.

Ambassador Shahed Akhtar talked about the first-ever joint Franco-German Embassy in Dhaka. It meant the two most powerful countries of Europe wanted to cooperate with Bangladesh. It is "a new symbol" of France and Germany relations, which forged partnership in 1963 by Elysée Treaty ending years of enmity. He also said that in the EU, the two countries also worked together on many issues. He asked, what would be the message for smaller countries if these two countries would go out of the EU and how would other countries react? Regarding *jihadist* movement, he mentioned that there are good number of Muslims (6 per cent to 8 per cent) living in France, whose economic and social conditions has not improved much. He wanted to know whether the policies of the French government are responsible for not allowing Muslims to adjust with the mainstream society. On the issue of cyberspace, he said that the French



government is working on better governance. But concern been expressed on this particular area. He requested the ambassador to shed light on that issue.

Shafullah Kaiser, Student, University of Dhaka, mentioned about a headline of *Al-Jazeera* on 29 March 2017 which was "French Elections: Manufacturing Consent". It reported that by openly supporting Macron's candidacy, the mainstream media in France was failing ethical standards of objectivity. He asked, 'is not it a big challenge for democratic country like France as the media took

a biased role?' Then he talked about migration policies of different candidates of France's upcoming presidential election. Some candidates took the stance that they would not allow migrants for security concerns. Besides, he said that Saudi Arabia allegedly funded terrorists. But France was not taking any steps.

Rafsaan Rabbi, Student, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka talked about the issue of nuclear deterrence. He mentioned that only five countries are NPT-designated nuclear weapon states (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States).

Then he argued that France was supporting Israel, but admonishing North Korea. Both states are not legally authorised. He questioned, 'why are these types of dubious roles are taken by France?'





Response by the Ambassador

Ambassador Mrs. Aubert said that France is a part of Europe and will always be. France's economy is integrating with most of its neighbouring countries. But at the same time, it has its own rules. Therefore, it makes a balance and does not interfere in others' national policy.

To **Dr. Syed Anwar Husain**, she said that the executive power is very strong in France. The President of the French Republic is the executive head of state. The constitution gives him power and control over foreign policy and defence. According to her, 'the President is the second king'. She opined that her country has a rich history of having mathematicians and scientists. The French people support democracy.

To Ambassador **Dr. Afsarul Qader**, the ambassador replied that the former colonies got independence from France in the 1960s. She gave examples of Senegal and Guinea who has their own policy. She emphasised that the former colonies have very strong relations with France and the country is not interfering in their internal matters.

Regarding nuclear issue, she said that it is their national defence strategy. The main doctrine of nuclear deterrence is "never use it". The NPT is a landmark international treaty whose objective is to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The treaty effectively recognises five states as nuclear weapon states including France. She said that France feels threatened from North Korea, which announced its withdrawal from the NPT in 2003, following the detonation of nuclear devices in violation of core obligations. North Korea is not transparent. From her perspective, the countries that are violating the NPT treaty can bring disaster for the entire world.

To reply for **Ambassador M. Shafullah**, she assured that if the UN recognises the Genocide Day, France would do the same.

To **Shamsher Mubin Chowdhury**, the Ambassador said that Nuncio is a diplomatic representative of the pope who has equal status of an Ambassador. The Vatican is a statutory state. She said that in many countries, the diplomatic representatives have been posted. The appointment of Nuncio is a diplomatic practice. France refuses to interfere in political and administrative issues of other states. But at the same time, France is a secular country and this identity will not change. Regarding *jihadist* threats, she agreed that it brought unity among people. But for politicians, to deal that issue would not be very easy as it has been followed by many complicated issues.

To **Sohel Ahmed Choudhury**, the Ambassador replied that her priority in Bangladesh is to develop bilateral relations. She argued that investment is a long process. Still, France has a big investment in Bangladesh, especially in the sectors where French companies' excellence is proven around the world. In Bangladesh, there are industrial ventures, including LPG, Sanofi (a leading pharmaceuticals company), which have been present here since before independence. The cement company Lafarge has been working here since 1980s. Moreover, the French company Thales, is helping Bangladesh in launching of the Bangabandhu satellite project. Another French company, Technip, built the country's first refinery in Chittagong. It will now prepare the design and relevant documents for engineering, procurement and construction of the new unit of Eastern Refinery in Chittagong. Syedabad water-treatment plant is also built by a French company. Concerning Sarkozy issue, she said, she heard about 'Sarkozy's policy that pushed the world against Islam. She reaffirmed that France was not against Islam but terrorism.

To Ambassador **Shahed Akhtar**, the Ambassador said that the Franco-German joint Embassy initiative is very important for their relations and also for Europe. Europe faced destruction during WWI and WWII. Through such initiatives, France could turn enemies into friends.

On the issue of cyberspace, the Ambassador opined that France believed in freedom of expression but would need to regulate the cyberspace for people's wellbeing.

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