



PROCEEDINGS

Seminar on

AI and Governance: Global Technology Architecture, National Digital Public Infrastructure and Policy Directives

20 August 2026



Organised by
Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS)



PROCEEDINGS

Seminar on

AI and Governance: Global Technology Architecture, National Digital Public Infrastructure and Policy Directives

20 August 2026



Organised by
Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS)



Published by

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS)

1/46, Old Elephant Road (West of Ramna Police Station)

Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.

Phone: (880-2) PABX: 9353808, 9336287, 8315808, Ext. 136

Fax: (880-2) 48312625

E-mail: po@biiss.org

website: www.biiss.org

Printed by

General Printing Press

98, Naya Paltan, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh

Phone: +88 02 583 177 42, +88 01710 956 575

Email: general.ppress@gmail.com

Date of Publication : 26 May, 2025

Price : BDT 120 | US\$ 5

Seminar on AI and Governance: Global Technology Architecture, National Digital Public Infrastructure and Policy Directives



Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) organised a seminar titled “**AI and Governance: Global Technology Architecture, National Digital Public Infrastructure and Policy Directives**” in its auditorium on 20 August 2026. **Md Ismail Zabihullah**, Advisor to the Honourable Prime Minister, Government of Bangladesh, graced the programme as Chief Guest. **Major General ASM Ridawanur Rahman**, awc, afwc, psc, G, Director General, BIISS, delivered the welcome address. **Dr Syed Muntasir Mamun**, Director General, International Trade, Investment & Technology and ICT Wing, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh delivered the keynote presentation; another presentation was delivered by **Ashfaq Zaman**, Chief Strategist, Dhaka Forum Initiative. There was an open discussion session. Afterwards, the honourable chief guest Md Ismail Zabihullah delivered his speech. The seminar was chaired by **Major General Md Emdad Ul Bari**, OSP, ndc, psc, te (Retd), Chairman, Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission who also concluded the event.

Senior officials from relevant ministries and government agencies, representatives of regulatory institutions, development partners, technology and financial sectors, members of academia, researchers, policy practitioners and students participated in the seminar.

Welcome Address



Major General ASM Ridawanur Rahman, awc, afwc, psc, G Director General, BIISS

General Ridwan began by saying an extraordinary transformation in the global technology landscape was being witnessed. On one hand, major powers were competing for leadership in advanced AI, data infrastructure and emerging technological ecosystem. On the other, countries of the global south were increasingly advocating for an AI governance framework that was inclusive, equitable and responsive to their developmental needs. This tension between technological competition and inclusive governance formed an important backdrop to the discussion. The international conversation on AI governance is evolving rapidly. Initiatives such as Global Digital Compact, emerging global dialogue on AI governance, OECD AI principles and the UNESCO recommendation on ethics of AI reflect a growing concern for protection of citizens' rights, accountability and human oversight on AI. Bangladesh is entering the AI divide with considerable experience. Over the past decade, the country undertook significant digital transformation. It also developed a national identity system with wide reach, expanded electronic management within public administration and witnessed remarkable growth in digital financial services. These achievements provided an important foundation for the next stage of its digital transformation and AI adaptation. However, digital transformation would not automatically translate into AI readiness. One of the central issues was, many of Bangladesh's digital systems had been developed vertically by different ministries and institutions. Data sharing for public service delivery frequently would rely on bilateral arrangements while registries and commercial systems might remain fragmented. This created a basic challenge. AI is only as effective as

the data, infrastructure, institutional arrangements and legal frameworks that would support it. If government agencies could not securely and efficiently exchange reliable and verified information, even sophisticated AI systems might remain isolated pilots rather than scalable solutions. Hence, interoperability should not be regarded merely as an engineering or software issue. It is fundamentally a policy, institutional and legal issue. There was the need of considering how government databases could communicate with one another seamlessly, common data sharing standards and protocols could be established, citizens consent and privacy could be protected, core registries could be reconciled, and most importantly, which institution or agency should have the mandate and capacity to establish, integrate, enforce common standards across government. These questions were essential if Bangladesh was to move from individual digital initiatives towards a coherent national digital public infrastructure.

AI had enormous potential to improve public administration. It could support evidence-based policymaking, improve public service delivery, strengthen revenue administration, enhance regulatory supervision, and help government institutions process increasingly complex volumes of information. But the risks must also be recognised. When an automated system would influence a government decision making affecting an individual citizen, there must be mechanisms for human oversight, explanation and redress. It would call for legal and institutional arrangements capable of specifying, testing, auditing, supervising AI systems, ensuring technological innovation would not come at the cost of citizens' right and public trust.

General Ridwan said, against this backdrop, the seminar was organised with a view to assessing Bangladesh's preparedness in embracing the evolving global AI architecture, developing a coherent national infrastructure, facilitating governance and public service. He then emphasised three principles he believed should guide Bangladesh's approach to AI governance. First, innovation must remain people-centered. Technology should ultimately serve citizens, improve public service, and strengthen human welfare. Second, AI adoption must be institutionally grounded. Bangladesh would need interoperable infrastructure, institutional capability, reliable data, appropriate laws and last but not the least, project itself as an active participant, not merely a rule-taker in the emerging global AI governance architecture. Its voice as a developing, digitally transforming country mattered, particularly in discussions concerning equity, access, capacity building and bridging the AI divide. He concluded by expressing hope that the discussion would help connect the global debate with Bangladesh's domestic realities, identify practical pathways towards a more coherent, secure, accountable and inclusive AI ecosystem.

Setting the Tone by Session Chair



Major General Md Emdad Ul Bari, OSP, ndc, psc, te (Retd)
Chairman, Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission

General Bari began by pointing out that for more than a decade, there had been extensive discussions and speculations about the emergence of AI, with numerous books and analyses warning of its potential impact. However, AI was now becoming a reality at an unprecedented pace, rapidly transforming societies and leaving little scope for inaction. It was already generating major global debates concerning human supervision, ethics, governance, diplomacy, appropriate balance between centralised and decentralised oversight. These debates had genuine importance. The discussion had now moved beyond principles alone, as AI was already entering the execution and implementation stage. This made it necessary to examine the phenomenon not only from a global perspective, but also through the lens of Bangladesh's local realities.

The country's development journey had been guided by the principle of inclusive development. In this context, Bangladeshi technocrats initially considered connectivity, particularly telecommunications connectivity, as a key instrument for promoting inclusion. Bangladesh had therefore spent the past two to three decades expanding connectivity, initially understood largely as voice connectivity. However, as connectivity became more important, a new form of inequality emerged in the shape of the digital divide. Bridging this divide therefore, became a crucial policy concern. Interestingly, the more efforts were made to address it, the broader its definition became. The divide did not remain limited to connectivity. Once people became

connected, it became evident that connectivity alone was insufficient. Access to the internet was necessary; subsequently, access to high-quality and high-speed internet became essential. With AI now emerging rapidly, the quality of connectivity had become even more important, as inadequate digital access could further amplify existing inequalities.

He provided the example of Bangladesh's agricultural sector to illustrate this challenge. Bangladesh remained an agrarian country, and a farmer's livelihood required access to credit, information and knowledge, seeds, fertilisers and markets. Equally important was access to transportation so that farmers could reach markets directly and reduce the influence of intermediaries. Technology had the potential to provide many of these services, but necessary systems had not developed in an integrated manner. For example, access to formal credit required an informal or alternative credit-rating mechanism, which in turn required a reliable identification system capable of connecting an individual's identity with relevant information such as an address or billing record. Bangladesh still lacked sufficiently integrated systems capable of making these connections. Similarly, connecting farmers with markets required significant data sharing and interoperability, which also remained limited.

There were technological and business-oriented reasons on why these opportunities had not materialised fully. Telecommunications connectivity required substantial investment and once networks had been established, incremental changes to existing infrastructure allowed operators to transition from voice connectivity towards internet connectivity. Nevertheless, once investment had to generate returns, there was a greater emphasis on optimising revenue. One of the easiest ways to increase revenue was to encourage greater consumption, particularly through video content. As a result, a farmer sitting in a field in Rangpur could access dramas, BPL matches, World Cup matches and other forms of entertainment. While such access had value, the farmer also had other priorities, including access to services that the state had not yet been able to provide effectively. Businesses had not necessarily focused on expanding the scope of digital services in ways that addressed these wider needs, as doing so required lateral collaboration across different sectors and institutions; such lateral coordination had traditionally remained limited within Bangladesh's governance culture. General Bari said this was an aspect he was particularly interested in hearing about from the Chief Guest.

He then spoke of how the arrival of AI created new possibilities as it had the potential to integrate systems rapidly and enable one system to communicate with another. Nonetheless, this potential also came with its own risks. Questions of interoperability, data sharing, governance and institutional responsibility would therefore become increasingly important. Against this premise, he proposed that the seminar's topic could be viewed from three interconnected perspectives: (1) how AI should be governed; (2) how AI could be used in governance; and (3) what would happen if human administration itself came to be governed or substantially influenced by AI. He concluded by saying these three perspectives were closely interconnected and there was the need of being considered together when examining the relationship between AI and governance in Bangladesh.

Keynote Presentation



Dr Syed Muntasir Mamun

Director General, International Trade, Investment & Technology and ICT Wing, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Dr Mamun began his keynote presentation with a light-hearted reflection on the presence of two generals in the discussion. Referring to the idea that, at the age of four, every child is a “general” with stars and stripes, he remarked that while some children grow up, others seemingly do not. He used this metaphor to introduce the contrast between two figures, Hector and the traditional warrior or conqueror. In his younger days, he identified more readily with the latter, someone who wanted to conquer everything and viewed Hector as an “idiot protecting an indefensible city”. As he grew older, particularly after joining the civil service, he came to appreciate the tragedy, irony and strength embodied by Hector. Hector, was protecting a city, its people, the fragile ideas of what civilisation could, should and ought to be. Although essentially unarmed and unable to win, Hector chose to protect and defend. This tension existed within all individuals, who could simultaneously possess destructive impulses and protective instincts. He then connected this reflection to the broader theme of the seminar, namely AI and Governance, Global Technology Architecture, National Digital Public Infrastructure and Policy Directives. Discussing AI could sometimes be more difficult than discussing the second law of thermodynamics and entropy as AI was continuously changing. Definitions, contexts and contours were changing every day, every hour and potentially every second. He therefore stated that his presentation should not be regarded as a conventional keynote speech, rather, be understood as a set of markers intended to stimulate discussion, with the substantive “keynote” emerging from the participants and subsequent deliberations.

He described the approach as deliberately provocative or *jeu provocateur*, intended to stimulate critical thinking. Among the propositions presented in the papers was the argument that Westphalian state systems could eventually collapse, followed by a period of “post-post-contemporaneity”, different forms of deep transformation and the emergence of “triple deformations” involving agentic, adaptive and agile fluid governance. He clarified that these represented a substantially different trajectory, although his own presentation would focus primarily on the mechanics of these developments.

The first area of discussion concerned the dual tracks in AI geopolitics and inclusive governance. The world was moving simultaneously in one direction and in multiple directions,

while Bangladesh had its own narrative and development trajectory. The central question was how these two dimensions could be reconciled. Second issue concerned the global AI governance landscape and raised several fundamental questions: how AI should be governed, AI governance could be used and whether societies would ultimately allow AI to govern them.

The third area was the shift from global norms to national practices. This was a period states needed to pay close attention to the environment around them and, importantly, the details. Referring to the proposition that “God is also there” both in what was evident and what remained hidden, he emphasised the need to examine underlying dimensions of the emerging technological order. Particular attention, he argued, needed to be paid to normative consensus, structural constraints and interoperability. Interoperability was repeatedly discussed yet was still not functioning adequately. The key question was therefore, how interoperability could be made to work in practice. The fourth area concerned policy directives and the way forward, for which he presented the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) as a practical use case.

Dr Mamun subsequently discussed the global employment implications of AI. Four dimensions requiring particular attention were identified: income, employment, assets and inequality. With regard to employment, he noted the coexistence of positive and negative expectations. On the positive side, AI was associated with expectations of approximately 78 million additional jobs, while on the negative, approximately 40 per cent of global jobs were considered exposed to AI. Both perspectives, were valid, as a fundamental transformation and shift was taking place. He characterised these developments as paradigmatic shifts. Referring to the concept of “black swans”, he argued that some of these developments were not entirely unforeseen. People had seen them coming but had failed nevertheless, to prepare adequately. He recalled that, in 2016, while working with Tesla and Alphabet from Oxford, he had been writing about these developments. At that time, people in Bangladesh regarded such discussions as belonging to the realm of fiction. However, these developments subsequently returned from Oxford to Bangladesh and were now directly relevant to the country. The central question was therefore, which of the competing trajectories would ultimately take precedence. In terms of the income outlook, he referred to significant positive expectations, including an estimated 62 per cent wage premium for AI skills. At the same time, he pointed at substantial negative consequences. When machine learning, cybersecurity and automation were considered together, the potential scale of transformation was enormous.

Human productivity could not, in many circumstances, match machine productivity, particularly in the segments of government operations in which public institutions functioned. Consequently, substantial gains and losses were occurring simultaneously, governments and societies needed to make choices regarding how they would respond. He identified global inequality as one area in which there was little ambiguity. Serious questions concerning inequality were emerging and likely to become increasingly acute over next three, five and seven years. He predicted global inequality indices could “skyrocket” during this period, regardless of political preferences. Referring to the historical experience of communist systems, including Russia, he noted that even under communism, there had been differences between rich and poor. More importantly, the AI transformation would have serious consequences for income



distribution. He therefore considered inequality to be one of the central dimensions through which the consequences of AI would need to be assessed.

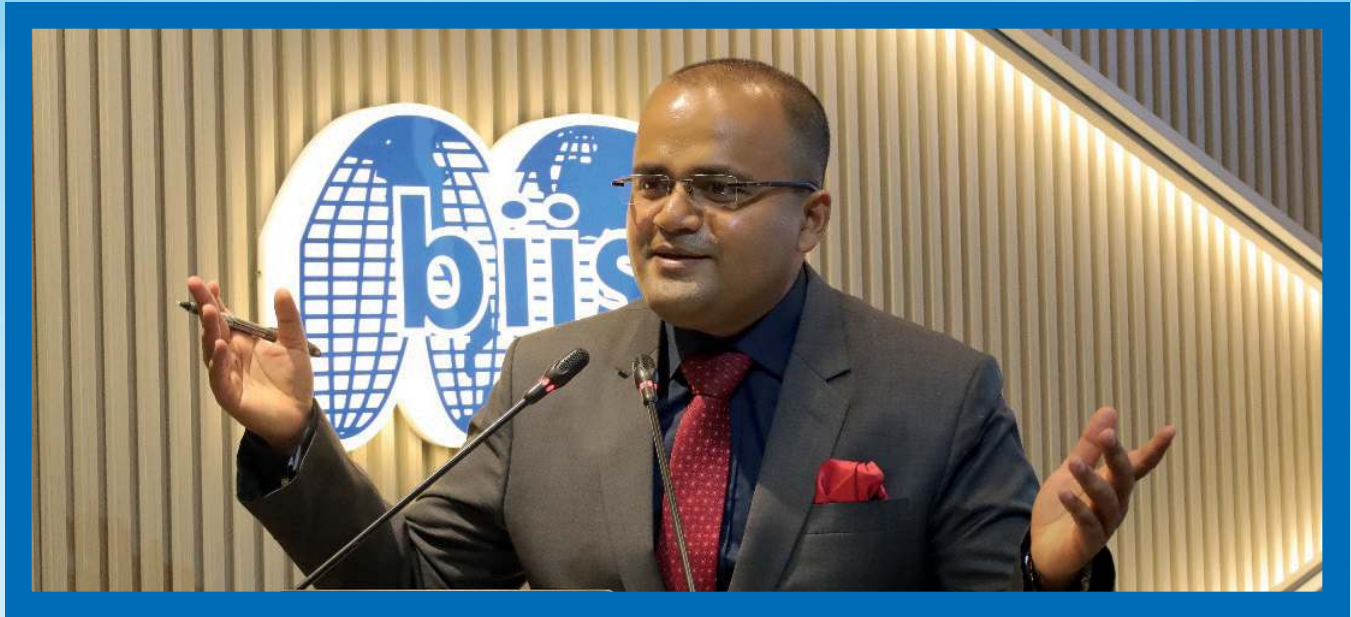
The fourth dimension, global asset distribution, was equally important. Dr Mamun explained that, historically, physical assets had been central to the definition of wealth. Oil, gold, diamonds, nuclear power and other basic materials had traditionally determined economic power and, to some extent, monetary and currency relations. AI, however, was creating wealth in a fundamentally different manner. He used Bitcoin as an illustrative example, arguing it was not a conventional physical asset but essentially a number generated through computations and equations. Those who solved the relevant computational problems first received a share of the resulting value. If the underlying systems were theoretically switched off, however, the asset could simply disappear, as it could not be physically touched. AI would increasingly shift appreciation, assessment and consolidation of assets towards AI and technology-related categories. In this context, ICT itself could eventually appear “analog” in comparison with AI. Resources developed during the preceding 10, 15 or 20 years could become relatively obsolete unless they were integrated with AI capabilities. Contrary to a common perception, AI could not simply be purchased, but had to be built. Something purchased off the shelf was a product or technology; in the broader sense, it required definition, development and institutional interpretation. This was where the real challenge of AI governance began.

Turning to the question of what actually constituted AI, he referred to the long-standing human aspiration to develop machines that could perform tasks on behalf of human beings. Humanity imagined robots that could help people undertake various activities, make friends or enemies, fight wars and travel into space. The question, however, was whether such systems

should automatically be considered AI. He referred to different representations of robots, terminators and automatons and questioned whether these should be regarded as AI. He similarly questioned whether neural networks and computational systems represented AI in themselves. His central proposition was that AI was, in many respects, a mirror. Human beings wanted to see their own intelligence reflected back at them and therefore, created systems intended to reproduce or emulate intelligence. Eventually, such systems could develop forms of intelligence and identity potentially superior to human beings in many respects, with intuition being one possible exception. Hence, AI was simultaneously “us” and “not us”. It could not necessarily be treated merely as an instrument permanently at human disposal.

This led Dr Mamun to his first hypothesis: whether AI could actually be governed. His “humble submission” was, it could not, at least not in the conventional sense. Humans could attempt to shape AI, not necessarily govern it completely; this proposition might appear unusual. Referring to the concept of *Insan-i-Kamil*, or the perfect human, he argued that human beings themselves had never been fully governable and AI might eventually develop characteristics beyond direct human control. It could eventually possess its own form of consciousness, although humanity did not yet know what such consciousness would look like. It might resemble human consciousness, could potentially reproduce some of humanity’s positive and negative characteristics. The irony was, humans were not merely creating AI, but also helping it build itself. Not everything currently described as AI was actually AI; several different models were widely available in the public domain, but much of what was referred commonly to as AI consisted of large language models and related systems. Artificial general intelligence had not yet entered the public domain in the manner commonly imagined, although there were substantial expectations, aspirations and ambitions surrounding it. Thus, the question became how AI should be defined. He referred to several possible conceptualisations, including creation of intelligent machines, simulation of behaviour, cognitive memory, intelligent problem-solving, human emulation, learning and decision-making. He noted that most participants in the seminar were likely already familiar with AI and its parameters. The tougher challenge was explaining AI to populations that never directly used it. In Bangladesh, over 91 per cent of people had not really used AI, but been subjected to AI interventions. AI could be understood in terms of computer-based cognitive functions, problem-solving, learning, intelligent artefacts, data transformation, algorithmic memory and machine learning.

From a machine-learning perspective, it involved emulation of thoughts and tasks, learning from behaviour and reinforcement learning, analogous in some respects to Pavlovian conditioning within the computational environment. Dr Mamun referred to his own research on keywords associated with AI and noted that human perceptions of AI included around 50 per cent human-based learning, 40 per cent computer-based learning, 35 per cent intelligence and machines, and 30 per cent artificiality; a significant proportion of people perceived AI outputs as natural. The underlying concept connecting these different interpretations was intelligence. Hence, he asked what intelligence meant. One possible definition was the ability to learn, use memory and knowledge, and measure an agent’s success through its ability to achieve goals across diverse environments. It could also be understood as a mental or cognitive capacity.



The next question was what constituted intelligence. His response was information. Information, in turn, had context, meaning, purpose, communication and value. Content could generate information, and information could subsequently be transformed into intelligence. Dr Mamun argued everything was content: anything visible or measurable, including objects, numbers, data, could constitute content. AI processed this content, transformed it into forms of information and, potentially, intelligence. In his view, AI would inevitably create winners and losers. For the first time in human history, individuals and societies could not simply opt out of the transformation. In earlier periods, someone could theoretically withdraw from society and become a sage in the mountains. That option was no longer realistic in a world in which AI would increasingly shape economic, social and institutional life.

Emerging winners would include highly skilled workers with AI-complementary capabilities; holders or controllers of data, models and computing capacity; leading technology firms and AI-ready companies; advanced economies possessing strong technological infrastructure; and workers in roles that could be augmented effectively by AI. These categories were particularly important for Bangladesh as they demonstrated where different countries and social groups could fit within the emerging hierarchy. Conversely, groups facing the greatest risks would include entry-level and junior white-collar workers, workers in routine cognitive and mid-skilled occupations, workers without access to reskilling and upskilling opportunities, economies that lagged behind in AI readiness. He linked this issue to one of the papers circulated at the seminar, which discussed the potential fall of the Westphalian system and the changing relationship between states and capital owners.

In Dr Mamun's view, six terms were central to understanding AI: normative, epistemic, semantic, epistemological, spatial and temporal. He argued that these terms would repeatedly appear in discussions on AI. The concept of spatiality, for example, was fundamental to neural programming and neural networks. Spatial positioning was not limited to longitude and latitude;

it also incorporated the temporal dimension. Using the example of military targeting, he said a weapon could strike a target as the target arrived at a particular spatial location at a particular point in time, when the projectile reached that location. Thus, space and time together formed important components of contemporary computational and AI systems. These six conceptual dimensions formed part of the intellectual backbone of AI and large language models currently in operation. He subsequently identified at least five major tensions governments and public institutions, particularly in Bangladesh and other countries of the Global South, would need to balance. These included food and finance; autonomy, agency and franchise; rights, responsibility and accountability; technology, markets and organisations. More broadly, governments would need to balance multiple institutional and social tensions created by the AI transition.

Dr Mamun's discussions with senior and junior officials revealed mixed reactions. Some were highly interested, sharp and adaptive, while others were extremely defensive; one official suggested AI should be prevented from "touching" government personnel, as it was evil. He remarked humorously that his response had effectively been to withdraw from the conversation. According to him, the global semantic landscape surrounding AI was currently dominated by several major developments. First, there remained a substantial digital divide. He referred to the 2022 launch of a UN programme concerning equality, while noting this remained insufficient in relation to current challenges. More importantly, there was now a deepening AI divide. Second, he highlighted the rise of the "omniscient enterprise", characterised by the concentration of capability, data, standards and narratives within a small number of powerful technology companies. Drawing a historical analogy, he noted the Indian subcontinent had once been colonised by one company, the British East India Company (BEIC). Today, there were over 10 companies with levels of power potentially greater than that of the BEIC, operating across different locations and technological domains. He referred also to the emerging competition surrounding AI, including developments associated with Pax Silica and the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organisation (WAICO), particularly in relation to secure AI, synchronised supply chains, international AI cooperation and capacity-building.

For governments and public institutions, however, most important considerations were facts, truth, narratives and algorithms. Dr Mamun highlighted several ongoing UN processes concerning global digital governance and AI, including the Global Digital Compact, an Independent International Scientific Panel, a Global Dialogue on AI Governance and the High-Level Advisory Body on AI. He referred additionally to several major global processes and platforms, including the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum, the Global Information Society-related processes, the AI for Good Global Summit, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), AI standards, the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence and the WSIS+20 review.

2026 and 2027 would be particularly significant, as many of these processes would coincide, intersect or interact at different intervals. This would create an important window for shaping the emerging global AI governance architecture; this period was particularly significant for Bangladesh as Bangladesh's Foreign Minister was serving as President of the UNGA. The UNGA President carried the honour, privileges and protocol associated with the position of a president.

He described Bangladesh's position in this regard as a matter of “serious good luck” and an opportunity that should be utilised strategically.



AI had political, technological, social, environmental and legal implications. It possessed an overt dimension, aspects visible on the surface, a serious underlying dimension, was closely connected with ethics, emerging imperatives and good-governance imperatives. The generals who had spoken earlier in the programme, already addressed some of these issues and subsequent speakers would likely elaborate on them further. Key areas included good governance, citizen services, resource optimisation, AI frameworks and regulation. Bangladesh still had substantial work to undertake in these areas. The country already had an AI policy, which he described as the second such policy in place since 2023, but there was a need for greater interconnection and integration; several “out-of-the-box” areas that could be explored, including language AI, sovereign AI models, remittance and related applications, regional convening roles and a range of smaller but potentially significant initiatives were also outlined. He then turned to a practical example from his own ministry: when he first worked in MOFA, his responsibilities essentially involved supplying printers and toner. He subsequently became involved in ICT and digital systems, after which the ministry moved towards neural networks.

Two years later, when he returned to the ICT-related position, his work seemingly returned to the provision of printers and toner. He questioned how and why such a reversal occurred and whether it could be corrected. He and his team had been working extensively to address this challenge, describing himself as a bureaucrat, further indicating this approach was intended to prevent unnecessary inconvenience to participants and colleagues. MOFA placed its services online. A range of systems and applications were available, including the E-App, CSAB and MET, among others. There had been suggestions that diplomatic officers and embassy personnel would be placed online and that people might still have difficulty contacting them. This was no longer a sufficient criticism, as citizens could now book appointments with relevant officials

anywhere in the world. The ministry's services were available through its digital platforms and invited participants to visit the ministry and see these systems in operation. The ministry shared its technological experience as a form of assistance with other governments, including African countries and the Philippines. One of the systems developed by the ministry was CSAB, which, according to him, had capabilities not necessarily available in other government divisions or initiatives. It could provide a comprehensive assessment of services, personnel, vehicles, cars and diplomatic bags at any given point in time. Referring to the concept of verticals and the technological "stack", he explained the ministry maintained this information for previous four or five years. However, the system had not yet been adequately utilised. All ministries could potentially use such systems. He referred also to the Foreign Minister's dashboard, saying he took the liberty of accessing the relevant profile and capturing a screenshot. The dashboard displayed various indicators and pending matters. The purpose was to demonstrate what could already be achieved through such digital systems.

The next objective was to move from digital workflows to agentic workflows. He described the agentic process through four functions: observe, reason, act and learn. The objective was to move beyond conventional digitalisation and develop systems capable of observing situations, reasoning about them, acting accordingly and learning from the outcomes. He further proposed developing a pathway towards Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) by building an enabling layer, developing common data layers, establishing agent-orchestration platforms, developing content policies, strengthening internal logging, and creating a specific pathway towards broader artificial general intelligence applications. MOFA was moving towards creating its own AGI capability. The intention was eventually to develop such a system in-house rather than purchase it externally; the financial cost was not necessarily prohibitive. The ministry spent less than Tk 12 lakh over a period of five years and suggested that with additional resources, it could move further towards its objective. Even without additional resources, it intended to continue moving in that direction. The more important question, hence, was whether the same model could be extended to other ministries. Dr Mamun had already offered the system to the previous administration and relevant authorities; with support of the Cabinet Division, these systems could potentially be incorporated across government institutions. Such integration could allow government to become increasingly self-populating in terms of data and information and enable policymakers to identify where value could be delivered. This was precisely where interoperability became critical.

Dr Mamun concluded by referring to a set of principles he considered essential for an AI system that was genuinely people-centred, institutionally grounded and active. These were justice, beneficence, non-maleficence, accountability, fidelity, autonomy and diversity. He described these as central or "centrifugal" principles, stating he found them particularly intriguing and illuminating. If Bangladesh and other societies wished to develop AI as people-centred, institutionally grounded and active, there was the need of being fundamental rules and principles upon which trust could be established. Trust began with these principles and depended upon them. He cautioned participants to not become lost in the technological detail or "pain" associated with AI. Ultimately, the technological transformation would continue to advance and institutions needed to prepare themselves for that reality.

Presentation-2



Ashfaq Zaman

Chief Strategist, Dhaka Forum Initiative

Mr Ashfaq Zaman began his deliberations by reiterating that AI probably would not replace humans. However, he referred to a famous quote that AI would not replace humans, but people who did not use AI would be replaced by those who did. In this regard, he expressed appreciation and optimism about the government’s growing focus on AI and its importance. He further highlighted that the Chief Guest of the seminar attended several international summits, where he contributed to discussions on AI-related aspects of Bangladesh; moreover, his position as the Chair of the Governance and Innovation Unit within the Prime Minister’s Office further demonstrated the importance the government placed on AI and governance. Mr Zaman himself had the opportunity to study at three leading universities: Cambridge, Oxford, and Stanford; at those universities, discussions on AI took place on a massive scale. Bangladesh was probably not yet at a stage where it could engage in discussions on the parameters or the depth of debates surrounding the possibilities of AI, but always demonstrated its capacity for frugal innovation and developed solutions suited to its own context. This was the focus of his presentation. Hence, he would like to focus on resources and capabilities Bangladesh already had, how these could be utilised to advance AI and governance, with particular emphasis on interoperability.

Regarding the assets Bangladesh already had, Mr Zaman highlighted the country’s biometric National Identification (NID) system, which he described as the fourth-largest NID system in the world, after China, India, and Indonesia. This NID system constituted a significant national asset, as it contained records of citizens’ fingerprints and, in many cases, iris data as well. He described the system as one of the most advanced mechanisms for ensuring secure digital identification. Besides, he highlighted the existence of Mobile Financial Services (MFS) and the Bangla QR system; these existing systems represented important assets or “ingredients” available to Bangladesh. The key question was how these existing assets could be utilised effectively to create new opportunities. Mr Zaman further highlighted another unique asset, namely the *D-Nothi* system: most government circulars, decision-making processes, file submissions, approvals, notices, and other official communications were managed through *D-Nothi*, a digital document management and archival system. The system had been adopted by more than 17,000 government offices, which meant a significant volume of government decisions and communications was

digitally recorded. However, these different systems and assets did not communicate with one another. Although records and digital assets existed, they were not integrated sufficiently to allow Bangladesh to fully leverage their potential. His presentation, hence, focused primarily on how these existing assets could be leveraged through greater integration and interoperability.

Mr Zaman shared a real-life example common to citizens, namely the repeated road works undertaken by different government agencies. This problem persisted for a long time and he explained how *D-Nothi* or the government digital stack could potentially be used to mitigate it. Decisions regarding road-cutting and repair works by agencies like WASA and Titas Gas were recorded separately in their respective digital systems; if these systems could communicate with one another, an additional layer of AI could be introduced to analyse the information, identify potential overlaps and provide recommendations on the optimal timing for different agencies to undertake their works. This could allow multiple agencies to coordinate their activities and complete their work during the same period, thereby reducing the need for repeated road cutting. Such an approach could save considerable time and costs for the government while also reducing inconvenience for citizens. He illustrated a scenario where three or four agencies planned, scheduled their works in advance and coordinated them so that a road was cut only once to accommodate all necessary works. This was not merely a hypothetical proposition, as a similar system had already been implemented in Britain. The country had a registry where such infrastructure works were recorded, after which AI and machine-learning systems analysed the information and recommended the most suitable times for agencies to synchronise their activities. According to him, this approach helped save time and costs while improving the quality of services provided to citizens. Mr Zaman opined this was only one example of how such an approach could be applied and suggested the same principle could potentially be replicated across approximately 64,000 public services delivered to citizens. The approach primarily involved utilizing existing digital assets, adding an intelligent layer that enabled various systems to communicate with one another, supported forward planning and facilitated more effective execution of public services.

At this stage, Mr Zaman focused on governance. He explored how the same strategy could be applied to governance by utilising *D-Nothi*, by utilising which and incorporating an additional layer of intelligence through AI, it would be possible to identify areas of inefficiency within the government's administrative processes. Such a system could identify where files were being delayed or held up, thereby enabling the administration to determine where expediting action was required and where underlying problems needed to be addressed. It could also help identify bottlenecks across different divisions, ministries and units. Furthermore, the system could provide information on the median disposal time for different administrative processes and assess how workflows were functioning. The system could also identify instances where a particular file in a specific unit was taking longer than expected and assess efficiency of the process from planning to implementation. Such information could be presented through relatively simple dashboards; given the datasets already available, such dashboards could potentially be developed within one quarter, or around four to five months, if the work was undertaken effectively. This would allow the efficiency of government institutions to be monitored systematically, help identify which units and ministries were performing well. High-performing units and ministries could be recognised

through awards based on their performance; the system could be used also to identify rework rates and, most importantly, facilitate informed, data-driven decision-making. This approach would enable the government to move towards a more effective system of data-driven decision-making.



One aspect often overlooked was the power of data. Almost everyone had social media accounts, generally provided free of charge; the question of who, therefore, was the product. Users and their data constituted the product, as social media platforms collected information about how people used their services, where they went, and what their priorities and interests were. Based on such information, these platforms provided targeted advertisements and other content; users' data therefore, constituted a central component of the underlying business model. Data-driven decision-making was an area governance could utilise and leverage, and it could bring about significant improvements. Several advanced countries, including Singapore and South Korea, had already made substantial progress in implementing data-driven decision-making in governance. As an example, he referred to the Prime Minister's Office of Singapore, which had a coordination cell that monitored performance of different ministries through a dashboard. AI was used to measure performance, identify bottlenecks and provide potential solutions. When governments had access to vast amounts of data, it was extremely difficult for humans to process and analyse all the information and determine the most effective combinations, options or solutions. AI, however, could process such large volumes of data and generate analysis within a matter of minutes; this was precisely the approach advanced governments were adopting to enhance governance and decision-making at that time.

Having AI technology alone would not suffice. Government officials needed also to be trained if AI was to be effectively integrated into governance. He referred to the example of immigration procedures, noting previously an immigration officer could take almost eight minutes to enter a passenger's name and complete the necessary immigration-related processes; the lengthy process indicated officials were not prepared adequately to work with available technology. He

therefore, stressed that technology adoption and human capacity development had to go hand in hand. That meant, while an effective technology stack was necessary, people using it needed also to be sufficiently trained and aligned with the technology. There was the need of training government officials in the use of AI so that they could utilise available digital infrastructure to save both time and effort. He illustrated this with example of preparing government circulars and drafts: if an official knew how to formulate an appropriate prompt, they could provide the prompt to the government's AI-enabled digital stack, including the *D-Nothi* system and generate a draft circular within a minute. A task that might otherwise have taken 10-15 minutes, including drafting, reviewing and checking for spelling errors, could therefore, be completed much more efficiently. Officials would not need necessarily to prepare documents entirely from a blank page or spend considerable time searching for relevant documents, as many government records were already digitally archived. By issuing an appropriate command, officials could immediately retrieve relevant information from the existing database. Hence, the approach involved adding different layers of intelligence to existing systems, models and datasets rather than creating entirely new systems from scratch. Mr Zaman also asked Claude to estimate how much time could potentially be saved by the government through such AI-enabled systems. Based on the number of government officials and units, the estimate suggested nearly 10,400 working years could potentially be recovered cumulatively within one year; the figure might not necessarily be entirely accurate, nevertheless, provided an indication of the considerable efficiency gains that could potentially be achieved by appropriately integrating and utilising AI within government processes.

He addressed a vital issue, namely whether Bangladesh could develop its own Large Language Model (LLM). The country had a significant advantage in this regard as it already possessed a vast volume of Bangla-language data. Most government circulars and official communications were prepared in Bangla and had been preserved in government archives. If these materials were appropriately utilised for machine learning, Bangladesh could potentially develop its own Bangla-based LLM, which he described as a Bangla equivalent of ChatGPT. India had already taken steps in this direction by developing its own language-based AI systems. Bangladesh currently relied on existing LLMs for translation and other language-related tasks, but he questioned why the country could not develop its own AI systems comparable to Claude or Grok. Developing a national LLM was technically feasible as Bangladesh possessed an enormous volume of relevant data. About 37 million publicly available documents in Bangla were already accessible and could potentially be used for training an LLM. He clarified that this figure did not include confidential government communications or internal emails, but referred only to publicly available documents that could be processed for this purpose.

A Bangla LLM could allow government officials to communicate with AI systems in Bangla and enable citizens to ask questions and access information in their own language. He highlighted the difficulties currently faced by citizens and researchers in locating information from government archives, including statistical data. In his opinion, researchers at BIISS also encountered difficulties in finding appropriate and reliable information when conducting research on Bangladesh. A properly organised and AI-enabled digital archive could make such information considerably easier to locate and utilise.

Discussions about utilising national datasets inevitably raised concerns regarding data security. Security was important but it should not become an obstacle to technological advancement. If Bangladesh developed and operated its own LLM using its own datasets, security risks could be managed through the existing classification mechanisms within *D-Nothi*, which already incorporated a classification system, meaning classified information could be prevented from being transferred to the LLM server. Large volume of publicly available documents would be sufficient itself to support the development of a national LLM. Having a national LLM would reduce the need for government officials, students and researchers to upload Bangladeshi government materials to external AI platforms such as ChatGPT or Claude. Servers of these platforms were not under Bangladesh's control. In contrast, a nationally developed LLM hosted on servers within Bangladesh would remain under Bangladesh government's control and within the country's sovereign jurisdiction. Hence, Bangladesh should consider developing its own LLM based on its existing datasets and digital infrastructure, while ensuring appropriate safeguards for classified information; such an approach would allow it in utilising own data, strengthen digital sovereignty and develop AI capabilities suited to national context.



At this point, Mr Zaman highlighted another area AI could be leveraged. He referred to a model UNDP and his team jointly explored, through which delivery of public services could be assessed and evaluated. Each public service could potentially be innovated and redesigned to simplify procedures and reduce the time, cost and number of citizen touchpoints involved in accessing the service. He illustrated this approach with the example of passport renewal: even when citizens opted for express service, passport renewal could need five to seven days. The process often required citizens to make an initial visit to the relevant office to obtain information, as the necessary information was not always readily available. They then had to collect or download the application form, complete it online or manually, visit the office again to provide fingerprints and biometric information. They had subsequently to visit a bank to make the required payment and, finally, return to collect their passport. As a result, the process could require two or three

visits, or even more. Mr Zaman then referred to the passport renewal process in the UK as an example of how AI and digital technology could simplify public service delivery. The UK used the GOV.UK platform, which provided access to a wide range of public services. Through the digital passport renewal process, applicants could take a photograph of their existing passport, which could then be verified against relevant databases using AI-enabled technologies. Applicants could provide biometric information through their smartphones, with the information being matched against existing databases. They could also take a photograph for authentication, enabling facial recognition technology to be used for identity verification. These processes could collectively be completed within approximately three minutes. The renewed passport could then be delivered to the applicant's home within two days, or the applicant could choose to collect it. Mr Zaman described this as a classic example of how AI could be used to simplify a public service by reducing processing time, costs and physical visits; applicants could potentially complete the entire process from their homes, cars or even while attending a conference. Bangladesh could move towards a similar model; the country had an important advantage in this regard as it already possessed a comprehensive NID system, whereas the UK did not have an equivalent system at the time. Hence, he suggested integrating the NID system with other public services could make the transformation comparatively easier, provided the appropriate mandate, commitment and effective implementation were in place. Passport renewal was only one example and the same approach could be applied to a majority of public services to reduce the time, cost and number of visits required by citizens. According to a survey, such reforms had the potential to save approximately 73 per cent of citizens' time in accessing public services, while also reducing associated costs. Implementing such AI-enabled service simplification across a broad range of public services could generate substantial savings, notably improving overall efficiency of public service delivery.

Bangladesh already had several vital digital assets, including the biometric NID system, Mobile Financial Services (MFS), the Bangla QR system and *D-Nothi*. What was needed was an AI-based unique identification application through which citizens could access, utilise and benefit from these integrated services. Here, he shared an anecdote about a meeting he had with Amandeep Singh Gill, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Technology, during which Achim Steiner, the UNDP Global Chief was also present. They observed Bangladesh did not invest millions or billions of dollars in innovation and research, nevertheless, developed frugal and indigenous solutions that subsequently become global case studies. Mr Zaman concluded by expressing optimism: Bangladesh would be able to adopt a similar approach in AI, develop innovative, context-specific solutions that could also serve as examples at global level.

Open Discussion



Mr Rakibul Hasan, Director, Link3 Technologies, introduced himself as a hands-on practitioner with 30 years of government service, 15 in the military, 15 with the BTRC and the National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre (NTMC). Drawing on this experience, he affirmed the Chairman of BTRC’s earlier observation of data governance remaining a challenge, noting during his time at NTMC, he worked to connect over 15 datasets, since data held in silos generated no usable intelligence. As decision-making ultimately depended on correlated data, Bangladesh’s National ID and mobile number system could serve as a unique identifier capable of resolving long-standing identification problems, particularly for citizens seeking government services online rather than in person. He also pointed to weaknesses in government API documentation, which he said made it difficult to connect datasets and extract meaningful insight, citing *D-Nothi* as an example of a system holding valuable data that had not been translated into decision-useful intelligence. He credited a cost-modelling exercise at BTRC with prompting him to learn programming, which in turn, led him towards machine learning and artificial intelligence; he has since authored eleven books on AI, including one titled *Tritiyo Buddhimatta Manobik Rashtra*, reflecting his conviction that bringing government data together could save considerable time and cost. Citing his own research, he estimated that at least 30 per cent of government operating costs could be saved through AI-enabled efficiency, including reductions in the time, cost and number of visits citizens would need for government services, with resulting savings redirected towards sectors like gas, electrification and power.



Ambassador Shameem Ahsan offered several observations from the perspective of a former civil servant. On interoperability, he said what was being described as a political decision was, in more familiar bureaucratic language, a question of coordination, governed by both written rules of business and unwritten political dynamics he chose to not elaborate on further. On the digital divide, he recalled the shift from landline to mobile telephony in the late 1990s, often described at the time as “leapfrogging”, and questioned whether that transition, and by extension current digital initiatives, genuinely been demand-driven or had emerged without a broad societal demand base. Drawing on his multilateral diplomatic experience, he raised concern that global norm-setting on technology was increasingly shaped by major powers pursuing their own national interests, even when conducted under multilateral auspices such as the UN and cautioned Bangladesh risked becoming subject to norms it had no part in shaping unless local innovation and local demand were placed at the centre of its own approach.

General Bari in reply to Ambassador Ahsan's points, agreed partly on characterisation of the digital divide as merely a buzzword. The World Bank tracked both a connectivity gap and a usage gap, arguing a further indicator, a "usefulness gap", was needed to capture whether services were meaningfully useful to end users such as farmers, rather than optimised primarily for corporate return on investment. On interoperability, he agreed that political will and allocation of business mattered, but suggested this was an oversimplification, since questions of algorithmic design and data consent were equally at stake. Reflecting on bureaucracy as a management system, he said its principal strength, compartmentalisation, also created gaps between departments that mirrored gaps in citizens' lived experience, which does not respect such boundaries. AI offered a possible solution to this interoperability problem, but realising it would require political will as well as a change in the very style of governance.



Ambassador Shahed Akhter asked how Bangladesh intended to reconcile its ambitions for AI adoption with persistent structural deficits, citing collapsing infrastructure after a single day of rain, a crucial skills gap, and large numbers of workers sent abroad for low-paid work as evidence of a deeper digital divide that would need to be addressed alongside any AI strategy.



Major General Ibne Fazal Shayekhuzzaman (Retd), questioned Mr Ashfaq about his earlier characterisation of security as a lower priority. Conventional understandings of cybersecurity understated the scale of threat once cyber hegemony, digital sovereignty and rapid pace of technological change were taken into account, describing it as close to an existential threat. He contrasted the speed of digital communication with the slow pace of bureaucratic response, such as a letter taking twenty days to be acknowledged and asked Mr Ashfaq to justify treating the ease of AI adoption as more urgent than the associated security risk.



Ashfaq Zaman, Chief Strategist, Dhaka Forum Initiative, clarified that he had not intended to suggest cybersecurity was unimportant, describing it as being of paramount importance, but noted that security was sometimes used as an excuse to avoid progress on AI adoption. Bangladesh needed to pursue both security and benefits of AI simultaneously, pointing to underlying structural gaps as the more fundamental problem: the country still lacked its own properly established data centres, most ministries' email domains were hosted on Google Suite rather than sovereign infrastructure Bangladesh had no SWIFT bureau of its own, leaving financial transactions dependent on other countries. He added that building domestic infrastructure would resolve many of these security concerns as a natural consequence, clarified using government circulars and Bangla-language documents to train a domestic large language model did not, in itself, constitute a security threat.

General Bari reflected on the evolution of cybersecurity as a field, observing that since the discipline emerged in the early 1990s under leadership of technocrats, relevant legislation and approaches had always been viewed through a “cyberspace” lens rather than a “security” lens, leaving the role of security agencies unclear even today. He also noted a tendency to reinvent existing crimes, e.g., hate speech, as though they were unique to cyberspace, when they remained crimes in the physical world. As the region entered a new technological era focused on AI, he urged participants to consider carefully the perspective and balance from which questions of accountability and security were approached.



Mr Abdul Mubin Ahmed, Vice President, Ulkasemi Private Limited, introduced his company as a chip design firm employing over 600 engineers who served Fortune 500 clients worldwide. Client demand pushed the company to establish its first AI team in 2025, focused on automating chip designs and predicted this trend would only accelerate. He said Bangladeshi engineers currently lack adequate AI training and called for AI to be incorporated into university curricula, stressing its applications extended well beyond agriculture and finance to healthcare, big data, astronomy, defence, education and research.

AI represented a fundamentally different kind of intelligence from human cognition, working through trained data models, for example, facial recognition systems now used at immigration checkpoints without the need to inspect a passport. He raised the question of data ownership as a matter of national and economic significance for Bangladesh, and, echoing earlier remarks about absence of domestic data centres, noting any future decision to build them would need to account for energy, water requirements and their environmental impact, but such infrastructure would eventually become necessary on security grounds.



Dr Syed Muntasir Mamun, Director General, International Trade, Investment & Technology and ICT Wing, MOFA, built on preceding remarks on data ownership and security, arguing these concerns extended beyond conventional domains of land, air, sea, space and the digital realm into what he described as a sixth, cognitive, domain. He drew a comparison with historical concerns about mind-control programmes once dismissed as conspiracy theory, arguing the aggregation of biometric and behavioural data by large AI models meant that data was increasingly shaping cognition itself, not merely recording

it. Within a few years, this dynamic would constitute a serious front for security and warfare, no longer confined to conventional law enforcement; he also pointed at advances in computation, from silicon-based semiconductors to emerging biological and other substrates, as a further frontier that could ultimately threaten state sovereignty for countries without independent capability in this area. He cited the estimated annual cost to Bangladesh of dependence on foreign-hosted protocols and platforms, referencing figures in the region of US\$ 1.3 billion in lost efficiency, a further 8.5 billion in direct cash costs, arguing that beyond governance and protocol, institutional reluctance to cooperate, characterising it as territorial ego, remained a significant barrier to progress.

General Bari acknowledged the point without adopting the same language, noting he deliberately avoided using the word “ego” but did not disagree with the underlying observation.



Mr Murtuza Zulkar Nain Noman, Joint Secretary, Planning and Development Wing, ICT Division, offered two reflections rather than a question. He recalled attending the International Investment Summit in Riyadh in 2024, where a session led by a Vice President of Google described AI as the future, while an immediately following

session by Professor Jeffrey Sachs linked the discussion to the conflict in Gaza, leaving him with the impression that the world stood at a crossroads between human and AI. Bangladesh which often used technologies like WhatsApp and email for negative rather than positive purposes, would need to approach AI carefully and balance it against human judgement. He referred to a training programme in Bangkok of June 2025, organised with Thailand’s Ministry of Digital Economy and Society, attended by 10-12 countries, where ethical and responsible AI emerged as the central theme; countries like Indonesia, the Maldives and Bhutan were advancing their own AI legislation. He provided an update on Bangladesh’s own progress, including work on a draft AI policy grounded in responsible and ethical principles, a source code policy, and a One Citizen, One ID, One Digital Wallet initiative. On data centre infrastructure, he confirmed the existence of two facilities, a 3 MW facility hosted at the ICT Tower by the Bangladesh Computer Council, with a planned disaster recovery centre at the Joydebpur IT and High-Tech Park, and a second, 4 MW, US-certified facility operated by Bangladesh Data Centre Company Limited at Kaliakoir, both of which were expected to be upgraded for AI use within three to four months.



Mr Raisul Kabir, Chief Executive Officer, BrainStation-23, described his company as among Bangladesh's largest software firms, with over 900 employees. He noted that initial fears that AI would displace software developers had instead given way to AI enabling the company to deliver more services and compete more effectively against international rivals, including those from India. He distinguished between innovation and invention,

noting around 20 staff at his company worked on invention, such as improving Bangla voice and language models, but argued that Bangladesh's more immediate opportunity lay in innovation, using AI to improve services and daily life, given the country's comparatively limited AI infrastructure relative to larger markets such as India. He suggested that data storage and invention should occupy perhaps twenty to thirty per cent of national focus, with the majority directed towards practical applications in healthcare, agriculture and urban life, citing AI-assisted traffic management as one example. He also sought to correct what he described as a misconception that Bangladeshi software firms lagged behind global peers, citing a focus group of fifty software companies which found aggressive AI adoption across the sector, even if this progress was not always well communicated publicly.

General Bari responded by saying the faster one would run in the wrong direction, the longer it would require to return, adding the session had so far heard predominantly from male participants and inviting a question from a female participant.



Ms Tasmiah Nuhiya Ahmed, Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh asked how far Bangladesh progressed in establishing a responsible AI framework that was genuinely cross-ministerial, rather than confined to a single ICT policy administered by one ministry; since AI applications spanned sectors like agriculture and beyond, a common standard applicable across all ministries was required, she asked for update on this progress.

General Bari said this question was precisely the focus of the session, noting a national AI policy, referenced earlier by the ICT Division, was still being finalised but was intended at providing an overarching vision for all ministries to follow, with the present discussion feeding into that process; a cybersecurity policy had been updated last March and April, besides formulation of a Personal Data Protection Act and a Data Governance Act, which he characterised as the legal basis on which a responsible AI policy would subsequently be built.



Dr Salma Akter Khuky, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Science and Technology, noted the draft AI policy referenced by the ICT Division was currently open for public comment and outlined recent initiatives from her own ministry, including the BEAR Summit 2026, addressed by the Head of the Bangladesh Mission (HBM), an upcoming innovation fair in September, and a planned AI summit in October. She described her

ministry's role as that of a think tank supporting AI-related work across sectors, e.g., agriculture, health, education, drawing on expertise from universities, research academies, industry. She also informed of plans to establish a dedicated AI institute to serve as a research and coordination body, working from the policy framework being developed by the ICT Division.

Address by the Chief Guest



Mohammed Ismail Zabiullah, Adviser to the Prime Minister, Ministry of Public Administration, opened by describing himself not as a technologist but a journalist by background, who learnt a great deal from the presentations and deliberations over the course of the session. The government's election manifesto committed to introducing AI across governance and affirmed the political will to pursue an interoperable, cross-ministerial AI framework; he cited existing data resources such as the National ID system, *D-Nothi* and the near-universal reach of mobile phones as a foundation to build upon.

AI, once a term that sounded illusory to the general public, had been taught in Western engineering universities and also in Bangladesh, for years before its potential was widely understood. The US and Israel embraced AI vigorously, with Europe struggling to keep pace, while AI was now being used in the Middle East for intelligence, targeting and precision strikes; here, he cited the killing of Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh in Tehran using a remotely operated, AI-assisted weapon as an illustration that AI has become an instrument of national power and geopolitics, with China and the US emerging as leaders of competing AI ecosystems.

The message for Bangladesh was to embrace AI while remaining cautious, particularly regarding interoperability and the consent of individuals whose data is used. He acknowledged, echoing points raised earlier by the two joint secretaries present, that Bangladesh remained at

the drafting stage of its AI policy, and argued that finalising this policy should be the immediate priority before other challenges could be effectively addressed. He expressed confidence in Bangladesh's talent but cautioned that brilliance alone would not constitute national capability; talent must be converted into technology, technology into institutions, and institutions into national power. Citing Israel's 2,150 AI companies as an example of how a small country could build disproportionate technological influence by connecting talent, research, capital, military experience, universities and entrepreneurship, he argued Bangladesh possessed the underlying advantages but lacked the ecosystem to convert them into AI capability.

In his opinion, public administration should be the first major battlefield for this transformation, envisaging AI assistants that could search authorised government knowledge bases to instantly provide officers with relevant rules, circulars and precedents, and cited the United Kingdom's structured AI training for civil servants as a model Bangladesh should not delay in adopting. He listed government expenditure, procurement, recruitment, health services, taxation, social protection and file management as areas ripe for AI application, and welcomed the recent introduction of AI for traffic violation detection on highways as a positive early example, alongside potential applications in project formulation and monitoring by the Planning Commission and Finance Division. AI adoption in government services would reduce demand for manpower at a time when the government's manifesto commitment was to create 500,000 government jobs, and AI's substantial electricity requirements meant an AI strategy could not be discussed separately from an energy strategy. Data privacy and classification of data suitable for AI use were further unresolved questions, while employment was perhaps the most difficult issue of all, given Bangladesh's dense population and the social value attached to work; he questioned whether the objective should be an AI-assisted government that would preserve human roles, or a fully automated one, called for a considered balance and reconciliation between the two rather than a stark choice.

He extended the discussion to national security and strategic affairs, noting the growing use of AI in intelligence, surveillance, autonomous systems and precision operations by modern militaries, opining control over advanced computing, data and algorithms would increasingly shape the future strategic balance, citing China's use of AI-driven surveillance as an example. Referring to the proverb, "a matchstick can either cook a meal or burn down a home", he said AI could equally strengthen government services or heighten political risk, create prosperity or widen inequality, empower citizens or expose them; the determining factor was not the technology itself but those directing it. He concluded by appealing to academics, bureaucrats, researchers, policymakers to use AI cautiously to modernise public services, finalise the national policy framework as a priority and adopt AI gradually while ensuring the public as its ultimate users, remained part of the process.

Session Chair's Closing Remarks



General Bari referred back to his earlier example contrasting a farmer's experience, where no system would communicate with each other and Bangladesh Bank's example of systems which would, calling this again, the question of *khichuri versus biryani*: *khichuri* alone was inadequate and further ingredients were required, even if a fully realised *biryani* remained some way off and an interim step, like a simpler *tehari*, might be more immediately achievable. Bangladesh was not an inventor of technology, but borrower, which meant the country could not afford to be agnostic about security and accountability; integration without accountability was not reform, but risk at scale. He stressed the importance of human oversight of automated decisions and of audited standards for algorithms, warning that without transparency and accountability, an "algorithmic divide" would emerge atop the existing digital divide.

The discussion addressed digital public infrastructure (DPI) in detail, and proposed a five-layer approach going forward: first, identifying and prioritising AI use cases; second, identifying enablers and assigning responsibility, which would partly address the interoperability and governance question; third, developing digital public infrastructure to facilitate interconnection, interoperability and identification; fourth, addressing physical telecom infrastructure, which underpins the entire system; and fifth, developing an AI strategy supported by policy and time-bound plans. From this, he proposed three action points: adoption of a national interoperability framework as the most urgent priority; the definition of operational rules and a consent architecture governing how legal consent is obtained from data owners, an issue he noted had not yet been discussed; and transparent standards for the procurement of AI algorithms. He concluded by saying Bangladesh's engagement with international AI and DPI processes should be grounded in demonstrated domestic practice rather than aspiration, and should reflect local priorities rather than the direct adoption of global discourse.

|— Editorial Team —|

Chief Editor

A S M Ridwanur Rahman

Director General

Editor

Mohammad Jasim Uddin

Research Director

Assistant Editor

Mahbubur Rashid Bhuiyan, *Senior Research Fellow*

Moutusi Islam, *Research Fellow*

Lam-ya Mostaque, *Research Fellow*

Ayesha Binte Towhid, *Research Fellow*

The Editorial Team thankfully acknowledges Research Interns **Rehnuma Tabassum** and **Sadika Khan Sara** for their assistance in preparing the proceedings.

BIISS Publications

Books

South Asian Regional Cooperation: A Socio-economic Approach to Peace and Stability
Nation Building in Bangladesh: Retrospect and Prospect
The Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace
The Security of Small States
ASEAN Experiences of Regional and Inter-regional Cooperation: Relevance for SAARC
Development, Politics and Security: Third World Context
Bangladesh and SAARC: Issues, Perspectives and Outlook
Bangladesh: Society Polity and Economy
South Asia's Security: Primacy of Internal Dimension
Chandabaji Versus Entrepreneurship: Youth Force in Bangladesh
Development Cooperation at the Dawn of the Twenty First Century: Bangladesh-German Partnership in Perspective
Conflict Management and Sub-regional Co-operation in ASEAN: Relevance of SAARC
National Security of Bangladesh in the 21st Century
Civil Society and Democracy in Bangladesh
Regional Co-operation in South Asia: New Dimensions and Perspectives
Confidence Building Measures and Security Cooperation in South Asia : Challenges in the New Century
Bangladesh-Southeast Asia Relations: Some Insights
Security in the Twenty First Century: A Bangladesh Perspective
25 Years of BIISS: An Anthology
Politics and Security in South Asia: Salience of Religion and Culture
Small States and Regional Stability in South Asia
Religious Militancy and Security in South Asia
Global War on Terror: Bangladesh Perspective
Towards BIMSTEC-Japan Comprehensive Economic Cooperation: Bangladesh Perspective
Democracy, Governance and Security Reforms: Bangladesh Context
Whither National Security Bangladesh (2007)
National Security Bangladesh (2008)
Human Security Approach to Counter Extremism in South Asia: Relevance of Japanese Culture
National Security Bangladesh (2009)
Energy Security in South Asia Plus: Relevance of Japanese Experience (2016)
Changing Global Dynamics: Bangladesh Foreign Policy (2018)
Bangladesh in International Peacebuilding: Discourses from Japan and Beyond (2019)
Bangabandhu and Bangladesh: An Epic of a Nation's Emergence and Emancipation (2021)
Militancy and National Security of Bangladesh: Policy Options and Strategic Outlook (2021)
Glimpses on Bangladesh: A Country of Hope, Love, Courage and Resilience
Developmet-Human Security Nexus: A Study on Padma Bridge Resettlement Areas
Look Africa: Exploring New Horizons (2025)

BIISS Publications

South Asia Human Security Series

Nepali State, Society and Human Security : An Infinite Discourse
Evolving Security Discourse in Sri Lanka: From National Security to Human Security
Violence, Terrorism and Human Security in South Asia
Women and Human Security in South Asia: The Cases of Bangladesh and Pakistan
Human Security in India: Health, Shelter and Marginalisation
Pakistan: Haunting Shadows of Human Security
Human Security in India: Discourse, Practices and Policy Implications
Human Security Index for South Asia: Exploring Relevant Issues
Ethnicity and Human Security in Bangladesh and Pakistan

BIISS Papers (Monograph series)

The Assam Tangle : Outlook for the Future (1984)
The Crisis in Lebanon: Multi-dimensional Aspects and Outlook for the Future (1985)
India's Policy Fundamentals, Neighbours and Post-Indira Developments (1985)
Strategic Aspects of Indo-Sri Lanka Relations (1986)
Indo-Bangladesh Common Rivers and Water Diplomacy (1986)
Gulf War : The Issues Revisited (1987)
The SAARC in Progress : A Hesitant Course of South Asian Transition (1988)
Post-Brezhnev Soviet Policy Towards the Third World (1988)
Changing Faces of Socialism (1989)
Sino-Indian Quest for Rapprochement: Implications for South Asia (1989)
Intifada : The New Dimension to Palestinian Struggle (1990)
Bangladesh : Towards National Consensus (in Bangla, 1990)
Environmental Challenges to Bangladesh (1991)
The Gulf War and the New World Order : Implication for the Third World (1992)
Challenges of Governance in India : Fundamentals under Threat (1995)
Bangladesh in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (1998)
Nuclearisation of South Asia : Challenges and Options for Bangladesh (1998)
The Middle East Peace Process and the Palestinian Statehood (2000)
Pakistan and Bangladesh : From Conflict to Cooperation (2003)
Integrated Coastal Zone Management in Bangladesh : A Case for People's Management (2003)
WTO Dispute Settlement System and Developing Countries: A Neorealist Critique (2004)
State Sovereignty and Humanitarian Intervention : Does One Negate the Other? (2006)
Unipolarity and Weak States: The Case of Bangladesh (2009)
Japan's Strategic Rise (2010)
The Fallacy of Fragile States Indices: Is There a Fragility Trap (2017)
Implications of China's Belt and Road Initiative for Bangladesh: A Strategic Analysis (2020)
Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience: A Quest for Human Security in Bangladesh (2020)
Covid-19 Pandemic in Bangladesh: Economic Impacts and Policy Implications (2020)
Understanding Bangabandhu's Foreign Policy: Principles, Priorities and Diplomatic Strategies (2021)
Repatriation of Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals: Political Security and Humanitarian Assistance (2022)

BIISS Publications

BIISS Seminar Proceedings

Contemporary Development Debate: Bangladesh in the Global Context (2014)
Moving from MDGs to SDGs: Bangladesh Experience and Expectation (2015)
SAARC at 30: Achievements, Potentials and Challenges (2015)
Bangladesh's Relations with Latin American Countries: Unlocking Potentials (2016)
Civil-Military Relations in Democracy: An Effective Framework (2016)
Recent Extremist Violence in Bangladesh: Response Options (2016)
25 March — Gonohottya Dibosh (Genocide Day) (2017)
Reconciling Divided Societies, Building Democracy and Good Governance: Lessons from Sri Lanka (2017)
Promoting Cultural Diversity of Small Ethnic Groups in Bangladesh (2017)
Upcoming 45th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of OIC, Dhaka: Revisiting A Shared Journey (2018)
রোহিঙ্গা সংকটঃ বাংলাদেশ কর্তৃক গৃহীত পদক্ষেপ ও পর্যালোচনা (Rohingya Crisis: Measures Taken by Bangladesh and Appraisal) (2018)
Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 (2018)
Bangladesh in International Peacebuilding: Experience from Japan (2018)
Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100: Implementation, Challenges and Way Forward (2019)
1971 Genocide in Bangladesh (2019)
Bangladesh-India Cooperation: In the Changing Regional and Global Context (2019)
Commemorating the Silver Jubilee of Diplomatic Relation Between South Africa and Bangladesh (2019)
International Day of Peace 2019 and Launching of Book Titled “Bangladesh in International Peacebuilding: Discourses from Japan and Beyond” (2020)
Implications of the Belt and Road Initiative for the Sustainable Development Goals in Bangladesh (2020)
Bangladesh-Nepal Relations: Prospects for Sub-regional Cooperation (2020)
Bangladesh and India: A Promising Future (2020)
Track 1.5 BIMSTEC Security Dialogue Forum (2020)
Bangabandhu's The Unfinished Memoirs: A Review (2020)
ASEM Day: Celebrating and For Strengthening Connectivity (2020)
Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Bangladesh: Options for Building Resilience (2020)
Leadership of Bangabandhu and Its Relevance to the Contemporary World (2021)
Bangabandhu and Bangladesh: Leadership and Foreign Policy (2021)
Bangabandhu's Vision of Sonar Bangla: Bangladesh at 50 (2021)
The Rohingya Crisis: Response of the International Community and the Repatriation Process (2021)
Revisiting Contemporary Peace and Security Challenges in the South Region (2021)
Bangabandhu and Bangladesh: An Epic of a Nation's Emergence and Emancipation (2021)
Exploring Korea-Bangladesh Relations in the Last Five Decades and Beyond (2021)
The Rohingya Exodus in Bangladesh: Regional and Global Security Implications (2021)
Bangladesh-South Africa Bilateral Relations: Exploring the Potentials for Future Engagement and Cooperation (2021)
Geopolitics of Indo-Pacific and Reconnecting the Bay of Bengal Littorals (2022)
Human Rights in the 21st Century: Rhetoric and Reality (2022)
Roundtable Discussion with H.E. Michele J. Sison, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization

BIISS Publications

BIISS Seminar Proceedings

Affairs, US Department of State and Her Delegation (2022)
Bangladesh and the United States Relations: Moving Towards Enhanced Cooperation and Partnership (2022)
Hybrid Seminar on Blue Economy and Maritime Security: Bangladesh Perspective (2022)
Bangladesh-India Relations: Confluence of Ideologies and Evolving Perspectives (2022)
The EU in the Indo-Pacific: A Committed Partner for Stability, Prosperity and Peace (2022)
Bangabandhu's Vision: Relevance in the Context of 21st Century (2022)
Climate Diplomacy: Constraints and Choices for Bangladesh (2022)
Bangladesh-Portugal Relations Quest for Deeper Bilateral Cooperation (2022)
Changing Global Order Securing Bangladesh's National Interest (2022)
New Frontiers of Human Rights Climate Justice in Perspective (2022)
Hybrid Seminar on Look Africa: Exploring New Horizons for Bangladesh (2022)
Hybrid Seminar on Promoting Multilateral Cooperation to Prevent Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling (2022)
BIISS Research Colloquium 2022 (2022)
Celebrating 50 Years of Bangladesh-Nepal Friendship: Shared Vision of Peace, Progress and Prosperity (2023)
Roundtable Discussion with Senior Director Eileen Laubacher, Senior Director for South Asia, United States National Security Council (USNSC) (2023)
Seminar on Gig Economy and Bangladesh: Opportunities, Challenges and Way Forward (2023)
Evolving Strategic Scenario in the Bay of Bengal Region: Bangladesh Perspective (2023)
Seminar on Contemporary Bangladesh: Security and Economic Perspectives (2023)
International Seminar on Bangladesh's Indo-Pacific Outlook: Opportunities and Way Forward (2023)
Roundtable Discussion on Bangladesh's Strategic Autonomy: Participation in International/Regional Organisations including BRICS (2024)
Seminar on The Rohingya Crisis: Contemporary Security Dimensions and Future of Repatriation Process (2024)
Roundtable Discussion on Strategic Autonomy of Bangladesh: Alternative Trading Arrangements (2024)
Interactive Session on Rohingya: Repatriation Process (2024)
Seminar on Global Economic Slowdown Bangladesh's Apparel Industry and Decent Work (2024)
Proceedings on the Regional Workshop on Bluer, Greener and Inclusive Growth in the Sundarban through an Ecosystem-based Approach (2024)
Seminar on Economic Diversification and Global Market: Bangladesh's Opportunities and Way Forward (2024)
Book Launching Ceremony Bangladesh on a New Journey: Moving Beyond the Regional Identity (2024)
Book Launching Seminar on Development-Human Security Nexus: A Study on Padma Bridge Resettlement Areas (2024)
Defence Diplomacy: Strategy for Bangladesh (2024)
Regional Seminar on Labour Migrants from South Asia: Issues and Concerns (2024)
Seminar on Application on Carbon Financing: Challenges and Policy Options for Bangladesh (2024)
Bangladesh's Climate Resilience and Financing: Challenges, Opportunities and Way Forward (2024)
Proceedings 17th Edition of Country Lecture Series (CLS) 2024 Bangladesh-Malaysia Relations (2024)
Seminar on Tourism for Attaining SDGs: Challenges and Prospects for Bangladesh (2024)
Seminar on Bangladesh-China Relations: A Future Outlook (2024)
Reconnecting the Bay of Bengal Region: Exploring the Convergence of Interests (2025)
Global Climate Negotiations: Challenges and Priorities for Bangladesh (2025)
Young Leaders, Sustainable Futures: Advancing the SDGs Together (2026)

• BIISS Country Lecture Series

BIISS Country Lecture Series: Part- 1
BIISS Country Lecture Series: Part- 2



Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) is an autonomous statutory institute established in 1978 by the Government of Bangladesh. The main responsibilities of the institute are to undertake study, research, and dissemination of knowledge on international relations as well as national affairs and state policy related to security, defence, foreign relations, international peace, security, and strategic aspects.

The priority areas of the institute's research activities are: foreign policy, security and strategic issues with specific relevance for Bangladesh; regional, inter-regional and international cooperation; conflict studies, peace keeping, disarmament, non-proliferation and area studies. Contemporary issues of global and South Asian security are also the focus of research activities of the institute.

The institute provides necessary assistance as per the demand of the Government in the formulation of projects and policies of related matters and their implementations. The institute also establishes working forum for acquiring further knowledge of relevant national and international issues and policies, and facilitates exchange of knowledge and views between officials engaged in the work of the Government. To fulfil its objective of knowledge generation, the institute carries out exchange of information, opinions, and materials with other institutions and scholars engaged in research in the country and abroad on the above-mentioned subject areas. The institute also acts as an archive for the study and research on international affairs and strategic studies.

The general guidance and superintendence of the institute's affairs are vested upon the Board of Governors, headed by a Chairman and consisting of representatives of government ministries, armed forces, academics and professionals. The Director General, as the Chief Executive of the institute, is the Member-Secretary of the Board. Research activities of the institute are carried out by the Research Faculty consisting of a team of full-time researchers with varied social sciences background.

Mailing Address

1/46, Old Elephant Road (West of Ramna Police Station), Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.
Fax: 88-02-48312625, info@biiss.org, website: www.biiss.org