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BANGLADESH DEVELOPMENT FORUM 2004:  
CIVIL SOCIETY'S PERSPECTIVES

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*The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), established in 1993, is an innovative initiative to promote an ongoing process of dialogue between the principal partners in the decision-making and implementing process. The dialogues are designed to address important policy issues and to seek constructive solutions to these problems. The Centre has already organised a series of such major dialogues at local, regional and national levels. These dialogues have brought together Ministers, opposition frontbenchers, MPs, business leaders, NGOs, donors, professionals and other functional groups in civil society within a non-confrontational environment to promote focused discussions. The expectation of the CPD is to create a national policy consciousness where members of civil society will be made aware of critical policy issues affecting their lives and will come together in support of particular policy agendas which they feel are conducive to the well being of the country. The CPD has also organised a number of South Asian bilateral and regional dialogues as well as some international dialogues.*

*In support of the dialogue process the Centre is engaged in research programmes which are both serviced by and are intended to serve as inputs for particular dialogues organised by the Centre throughout the year. Some of the major research programmes of the CPD include **The Independent Review of Bangladesh's Development (IRBD), Trade Policy Analysis and Multilateral Trading System (TPA), Governance and Policy Reforms, Regional Cooperation and Integration, Investment Promotion and Enterprise Development, Agriculture and Rural Development, Ecosystems, Environmental Studies and Social Sectors and Youth Development Programme.** The CPD also conducts periodic public perception surveys on policy issues and issues of developmental concerns.*

*As part of CPD's publication activities, a CPD Dialogue Report series is brought out in order to widely disseminate the summary of the discussions organised by the Centre. The present report contains the highlights of the dialogue on **BANGLADESH DEVELOPMENT FORUM 2004: CIVIL SOCIETY'S PERSPECTIVES** held on 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2004 under the CPD's **IRBD** Programme.*

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## *Dialogue Report on*

# BANGLADESH DEVELOPMENT FORUM 2004: CIVIL SOCIETY'S PERSPECTIVES

## **1. THE DIALOGUE**

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) organised a national dialogue titled “Bangladesh Development Forum 2004: Civil Society’s Perspectives” which was held on May 05, 2004 at the CIRDAP auditorium, Dhaka. The purpose of the dialogue was to create an opportunity for constructive engagement to discuss the context, agenda and possible outcomes of the Bangladesh Development Forum 2004 (BDF 2004), scheduled to be held during May 9-11, 2004. Furthermore, the dialogue was to create a platform for candid and open discussion on issues on the table, for major stakeholders including the civil society groups, the government and the development partners.

*Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya*, Executive Director, CPD, presented the keynote paper at the dialogue. *Professor Rehman Sobhan*, Chairman, CPD, presided over the dialogue. The Honorable Minister for Finance and Planning *Mr M Saifur Rahman*, MP was present at the dialogue as the Chief Guest. *Mr Mushfiqur Rahman*, MP, Chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Finance and *Mr Saber Hossain Chowdhury*, Political Secretary to the Honorable Leader of the Opposition in the parliament were the Special Guests on the occasion.

Participants of the dialogue included leaders of the mainstream political parties, high level policymakers, representatives of international and bilateral development agencies, leading development activists, leaders of the trade bodies, academics, and media personalities. The list of participants is attached in Annex 1.

## **2. THE KEYNOTE PRESENTATION**

*Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya*, Executive Director, CPD, presented the keynote paper titled “Bangladesh Development Forum 2004: Civil Society’s Perspectives”. The presentation focused on the evolving aid relationship of Bangladesh and contextualised this with the holding of BDF 2004. *Bhattacharya* stated at the outset that the purpose of his

presentation was not to assess the micro-level impact of foreign aid in Bangladesh either<sup>1</sup>; rather the focus of his presentation was to analyse the dynamics of Bangladesh's aid situation, relate this to the holding of BDF, and comment on some of the agenda that will be discussed at the BDF.

*Bhattacharya* drew the attention of the dialogue participants to the dilemma of the civil society with regard to foreign aid. The civil society believes in articulating a domestically-owned development agenda evolving through a participatory process. Consequently, the Bangladesh civil society has strong reservations regarding the hands-on policy stance of the donors projected through the various aid conditions. On the other hand, he pointed out that a number of issues raised by the donors with the government are of high interest and concern to the country's civil society and these have been articulated by the citizens of the country on several occasions. A number of the "prior actions" stipulated by the donors had long been the mainstream demands of the civil society, such as setting up an independent Anti-Corruption Commission.

*Bhattacharya* felt that the citizens of the country feel disempowered to observe that the government is more responsive to demands from the donors, instead of being responsive to its citizens' concerns. The dilemma of the civil society is that when it criticises the "intrusive approach" of the development partners, there is a danger that the issues of common concerns flagged by the BDF will get undermined as well.

*Bhattacharya* reviewed Bangladesh's aid situation in the context of the global aid scenario and the demands relating to the transfer of resources articulated at some of the recent global initiatives. The flow of Official Development Assistance (ODA) had only marginally increased in the run up to the Monterrey meeting (2002) amounting to US\$51 billion annually. However, the share of low income countries in this flow had indeed decreased and stood at less than 50% in FY01.

*Bhattacharya* presented an analysis of the dynamics of aid flow to Bangladesh and noted that the country has been facing an image problem, as it is considered an extremely aid dependent country. However, empirical evidence shows otherwise. In terms of the volume of aid received, Bangladesh's position is 11<sup>th</sup> among the 134 countries; countries such as Pakistan, India and Indonesia are far ahead of Bangladesh in terms of flow of

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<sup>1</sup> The *Independent Review of Bangladesh Economy* for 2003 (IRBD 2003), the annual state of economy report prepared by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) takes a close look at the micro-level impact and other issues related to foreign aid.

ODA. Moreover, in terms of per capita foreign aid, Bangladesh's position is 86<sup>th</sup> among 134 aid recipient countries. He pointed out that Bangladesh is experiencing a burgeoning aid pipeline in recent years. The country has received US\$49.12 billion in foreign aid since the day of independence (1972), of which more than US\$40.74 billion has been disbursed; an aggregate disbursement rate of 83%. The trend in aid disbursement shows that the disparity between the commitment and disbursement is increasing over time. During July 2002-June 2004 (FY03), only 73% of the total committed aid had been disbursed. Consequently, the total aid pipeline stood at more than US\$6.2 billion as of June 30, 2003, of this 96% was on account of project aid.

Presenting a disaggregated analysis of aid flow, *Bhattacharya* noted that the change of ODA's composition showed a significant shift in donors' emphasis from grants to loans. The share of grants in total ODA declined from 48% in FY91 to 21% in FY03. The donors preferred loans even if it is a "soft loan" in comparison to a grant, as it is maintained that loans obligate the recipient country to use the resource more responsibly. Concurrently, the relative shares of project, commodity and food aid have undergone discernible changes. The share of commodity aid in total ODA has declined from 24% in FY91 to about 11% in FY03, as the need for balance of payment support is not as important as it was in the 1980s. The share of food aid has also declined from 15% in FY91 to only 3% in FY03, as Bangladesh moved towards food self sufficiency. This implies that foreign aid currently comes to Bangladesh overwhelmingly in the form of project aid (86% in FY03). On the other hand, with respect to sources, bilateral aid is becoming more predominant compared to multilateral aid. The share of bilateral aid in total ODA has increased from 39% in FY91 to 49% in FY03, while the share of multilateral aid declined from 61% FY91 to 51% in FY03.

*Bhattacharya* observed that the foreign debt situation of Bangladesh was under control and compared very favourably with other countries. Total debt service liability (DSL) as a percentage of total foreign earnings<sup>2</sup> has declined from 11% in FY91 to 6% in FY03, while outstanding foreign debt as a share of GDP has decreased from 41% in FY91 to 32% in FY03. Per capita debt remained more or less stable over the period and presently stands at U\$122, which essentially means that currently every child in Bangladesh is born with a foreign debt amounting to Tk.7200.

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<sup>2</sup> Total foreign earnings comprise the total export, remittances and invisible earnings.

Share of ODA in GDP and per capita availability of foreign aid have been waning over the last decade. ODA as percentage of GDP has dropped by half as it declined from 5.6% in FY91 to 2.8% in FY03. On the other hand, the per capita ODA availability<sup>3</sup> declined from US \$ 65.24 in FY91 to US \$ 57.25 in FY03.

*Bhattacharya* mentioned that the diminishing relative role of foreign aid in the Bangladesh economy needs to be assessed in terms of other macroeconomic variables. In FY03, foreign aid accounted for less than a quarter (24.2%) of Bangladesh's export earnings. On the other hand, foreign remittance from migrant workers was almost double the amount of foreign aid inflow. These trends indicate the diminishing importance of foreign aid as a source of foreign exchange. Further, ODA as a percentage of revenue receipt was only 26.8% in FY03; compared to 106.2% in FY81. *Bhattacharya* pointed out that during the 1980s, ADP was almost fully funded by foreign aid; at present it is less than 50% and was only 42% during the last fiscal year (FY03). On the other hand, the dependence on foreign aid for financing the fiscal deficit, emerging from the need for financing development activities, has also come down to 52.5% in FY03.

*Bhattacharya* cautioned the audience that whilst it is true the role of ODA in the Bangladesh economy is sharply decreasing, it does not necessarily mean that there is no need for foreign aid in the economy. Indeed, there was a savings-investment gap in the economy and part of this has to be bridged through financing from external resources, either through foreign aid, foreign direct investment, remittances or by a combination of these. Sectoral aid intensity shows a significant trend. Interestingly, during the last two political regimes, transport remained the highest recipient of ODA, while health, population and family welfare secured second position in terms of sectoral weighted shares (percent) and dependence. Five sectors, namely transport, health and population, education and religious affairs, rural development, and power essentially account for three quarters (73.3% in FY03) of the total project aid at present. Foreign aid has been playing an increasingly important role in terms of financing the non-government sector, and also the private sector. The grant support to the NGOs was US \$250 million in FY03. At the same time, whether through equity participation or through soft-term loans or through risk-underwriting, the private sector had received more than US \$300 million

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<sup>3</sup> Annual ODA Availability= (Opening Pipeline+ annual commitment)+/- transfer/cancellation

during the FY98-02 period. Thus, though foreign aid's role has been declining in the national economy, it continues to play a strategic role.

*Bhattacharya* underscored the valiant features in the backdrop of which the BDF 2004 was taking place. In this connection, he outlined the context of the upcoming Bangladesh Development Forum meeting in the following manner:

- Continuation of the welcome tradition of meeting in Dhaka (first time in 1973, after a long pause in 1997 and 2003)
- Bangladesh, after a long hiatus, is under a IMF programme
- Intensification of political acrimony and agitation
- PRSP process is attaining maturity and there is now an opportunity to review Interim-PRSP implementation.
- Relatively strong macroeconomic fundamentals, yet donors' restive mood about reforms.
- Opportunity to take stock and avert "mid-term inertia" that tends to impede the second half of Government' terms.

In the context of BDF 2004, *Bhattacharya* raised a number of emerging concerns of the civil society in relation to the themes of the five working sessions of BDF 2004, these related to: (i) Macroeconomic; (ii) Meso/sectoral; (iii) Reforms; (iv) Governance; and (v) PRSP.

On the macroeconomic issue, *Bhattacharya* noted that although the macroeconomic fundamentals remain healthy, there are a number of concerns:

- The weak capacity for utilisation of foreign aid, leading to the low level of ADP implementation which is a major concern;
- Slow realisation of NBR targets coupled with the underachieving of non-NBR and non-tax targets may create a need to borrow more than the target to provide counterpart fund for full implementation of the ADP.
- Keeping revenue expenditures within the budgetary limit, streamlining "subsidies" to energy sector on account of the rise in global price of petroleum products;

- Failure to export and slowdown of remittance together with the recent robust import surge may put pressure on the BOP. This fear was compounded by uncertainties emanating from the impending phase-out of MFA.

On the meso/ sectoral issue, the paper highlighted the following concerns to be addressed in the upcoming BDF:

- Operationalisation of “Programme Approach” for aid financing for sectoral programmes (e.g. Health & Primary Education) and scope for Overall Budgetary Support
- Streamlining and strengthening of project processing;
- Trade-related technical assistance for capacity building for export diversification and trade negotiations;
- Resources for the expansion of health and education services, and improving the quality of expenditures;
- Developing of investment and trade infrastructure including modernising ports, power generation and national gas supply, building roads and bridges.

Regarding the ongoing reform agenda, which was likely to be a major focus of BDF 2004, *Bhattacharya* noted the following:

- Banking Sector Reform – Relatively, the most advanced area of the reforms. The schedule for privatisation of banks appears unrealistic;
- Privatisation – The process remains paralysed with the Privatisation Commission having nothing much to do;
- Revenue Mobilisation – Indirect tax, viz. VAT (local) is expanding; while income tax base is broadening and plugging of leakages are progressing slowly. Indirect tax tends to be inequitable.
- Quality of Public Expenditure – Need to act more energetically on the recommendations of the Public Expenditure Review Commission (PERC);
- Public Administration Reform – The incentive structure demands radical reform, and manpower needs to be rationalised. Implementation of recommendations of earlier Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC)



- Local Government–Devolution of power to the elected local bodies, and strengthening related institutions. Recent experience with *Gram Sarker* is rather frustrating.

On the governance issue, *Bhattacharya* noted that the following issues needed more in-depth discussion which include the present state of functioning of the legislative body, efficacy of the envisaged Anti-Corruption Commission, law and order & human rights situation, separation of Judiciary from the Executive, government's relationship with the NGOs and phasing-in of trade union rights in EPZs.

*Bhattacharya* considered PRSP as one of the major issues to be discussed during the BDF 2004. He underlined the importance of the following issues in this context:

- Interface with the mid-term planning process (Plan Holiday ?)
- Consultation in the process of finalising PRSP
- Preparing sectoral targets and estimates of resource requirements
- Ownership by the ministries and integration of sectoral programmes in PRSP
- Resource envelope for PRSP (to be estimated through top-down or down-up method)

*Bhattacharya* wrapped up his presentation by stressing on the required follow-ups of the BDF. He pointed out that the BDF was no more a pledging platform for the donors; however, its proceedings were likely to influence the mid-term prospect of Bangladesh's aid availability. BDF 2004 may revisit the agreed policy measures to evolve a realistic timeline for the reform measures that are fully owned by the GOB. He further stressed that the BDF 2004 should provide indications about donor's contribution to the resource envelope for the PRSP. It may consider donor support to underwrite a possible BOP problem following the total phase-out of the MFA in January 2005. In concluding his presentations, *Dr. Bhattacharya* pointed out that BDF 2004 was only an event at a point in time, and that the hard work on many of the issues flagged through government-development partners' dialogue that concern the real interest of the country, will have to be continued in earnest by all the national actors. He concluded by saying that if in this process the BDF forfeits its relevance, that will be the litmus test and a measure of the real efficacy of Bangladesh's aid partnership.

### 3. THE CIVIL SOCIETY PERSPECTIVES

A lively discussion took place following the keynote presentation which dealt with such issues as the agenda to be discussed in BDF 2004, conditionality of foreign aid, accountability of NGOs, law and order situation; and the state of political governance and the current political situation. The chairman in his opening remarks noted that the first BDF took place in Dhaka, in 1973 and hoped that henceforth all development forums will be held in Dhaka. Addressing the distinguished participants, he initiated the open discussion by saying that CPD felt it appropriate that it should take an initiative to assemble civil society members at a platform where it was able to share its views with the Finance Minister who will lead Bangladesh's delegation at the BDF. Such a Forum will also allow the development partners to share their perspectives on the agenda of the BDF.

The following is a summary of the major points raised throughout the dialogue.

#### 3.1 Policy Ownership

There was wide consensus among the participants about the need for owning policies to be organised by the GOB. It was felt that if all parties agreed to a policy that they thought should be pursued by government, then those policies should be owned by the government and the nation as a whole, and not be left to the discretion of the development partners. Taking part in the discussion, *Professor Rehman Sobhan* observed that any process that sets the trajectory of Bangladesh's development and its agenda for reform should originate from within the country. It should be something that is developed by the elected representatives and the policymakers and it should derive from a process of consultation with and within the civil society. Such a process should emerge as a process of change within the economy and society, which then can be communicated with our development partners, he added. *Professor Sobhan* observed that the development partners have now alleviated the concept of 'policy ownership' to a permanent feature of the contemporary agenda on international aid movements, and that the Bangladesh civil society respects such a policy shift. Many participants agreed with *Professor Sobhan*, and felt that policy ownership should be internalised into our policy making processes. They agreed with the assertion made by the keynote presenter that the lack of ownership undermines both design and implementation of policies.

### **3.2 Environment for Development: Confrontational Politics, Law and Order and Corruption**

A stimulating discussion took place on the issue of creating a suitable environment for development to take place in Bangladesh. A number of participants were critical about the political situation, criticising the state of law and order and felt that widespread and pervasive corruption was punting the economic potential of the country.

*Mr Kutubuddin Ahmed*, President, MCCI, emphasised the importance of ensuring a peaceful environment for conducting business in Bangladesh. Referring to the recent political confrontations, he observed that during the opposition campaigns and government's mass arrest programmes, businessmen suffered most. Workers and businessmen were sentenced to jail, and many business enterprises had to be closed down. He thought that politicians from both major parties should come forward with a *common agenda* relating to the way the national economy should be run. He felt that some crucial areas of developmental significance should be spared from confrontational political movements. Complaining about the existing law and order situation, *Mr Ahmed* questioned whether one could expect foreigners to invest in Bangladesh at a time when local investors do not feel confident to do so. Some of the participants recalled that the Transparency International Report had identified Bangladesh as the most corrupt country for last three consecutive years. This was entirely unacceptable, and he thought that the government lacked a *vision* in terms of controlling such widespread corruption.

*Ms Sultana Kamal*, Executive Director of Ain-O-Shalish Kendra-ASK, stressed the issue of human rights and governance. Quoting from ASK, she informed the participants that there had been more than 250 cases of violence against women, (including rape, acid burn, dowry related violence and *fatwa*), 136 cases of journalist harassment, 250 cases of political clash, and 46 deaths in police custody only January to March 2004 only. In some places, it was the law enforcing agencies that were directly responsible for many of the assaults, she added. Referring to that day's (05.05.2004) newspaper, she commented that people like "*Bangla Bhai*" are taking the law in their hands. This was very disturbing, she maintained. Failures to reduce political tension and to strengthen the democratic process have further undermined the ability of state institutions to uphold the rule of law, including safeguards against human rights violations. Describing the current situation as totally unacceptable, *Ms Kamal* accused the police and administration of a dysfunctional parliament, confrontational politics, ineffective judiciary, and endemic corruption for the

dismal law and order situation and for the ever increasing crime rate. She felt that these were major obstacles to Bangladesh's development.

*Mr Ataus Samad*, an eminent journalist, noted that the security of the individual citizens is the most important issue from the perspective of development, and the journalists have been talking and writing about this issue for a long time. He expressed his disappointment that the general citizens do not feel secure any more, and this sense of insecurity has spread all over the country. He pointed out that the journalists have warned the government through their writing that if they fail to provide personal security, people will think of alternative methods in order to protect themselves, and will act accordingly. He mentioned that such failure had given rise to a group of vigilantes who are acting in the presence of the police. He felt that this was because the policemen have abrogated their duty and handed this over to the vigilantes, the vigilantes have been set up by the police, the vigilantes and the police are working in tandem at the instruction of political leaders. If that is the situation, he continued, then the party at the receiving end has an equal right to strike back in the name of 'self defence'. He questioned whether we are handing the country over to the vigilantes and warlords who are at loggerheads with each other at times. He cautioned that such a situation would strike at the root of democracy and the state. He warned that such a state of affairs cannot exist! A further issue that *Mr Samad* drew the attention of the audience towards was the issue of justice for the poor. He observed that the insecurity of the impoverished and the failure of the judicial system to protect them was demonstrated during the episodes of mass arrests, when the magistrates sentenced accused people for something which they alleged that the arrested people had done without giving the accused an opportunity to defend themselves. He felt that the human rights institutions and the NGOs have to some extent failed their duties. He opined that his experience tells him that in Bangladesh 'corruption has increased with foreign aid'.

*Mr A.K. Azad*, President, Bangladesh Chamber of Industries, questioned the political representatives as to what they have done for the business community and for the people over the last few years? Pointing to the failure of both the government and the opposition political parties, he questioned the justification of enjoying public money without attending parliament! Pointing at some earlier incidences, including the recent killing of CEPZ head, he put the question before the civil society and the political leaders that if a

person such as the CEPZ head can not live, how can justice be ensured for the common people!

Former Deputy Speaker of parliament, *Professor Ali Ashraf*, mentioned that the situation regarding law and order and governance should be the top agenda in any country. He urged the government and all concerned to try to not top the list of the Transparency International report again. He requested CPD to organise a dialogue on corruption, where all major stakeholders should be invited to have an honest and open discussion.

### **3.2 Conditionality and Management of Aid**

The dialogue saw an open discussion on the issues of aid conditionality and the management of aid. The discussion centred on the targeting and effectiveness of aid administration.

Recalling an early debate regarding whether foreign aid was for the government or for the people, former Finance Minister and the Member of CPD Board of Trustees *Mr M Syeduzzaman* noted that it was now universally accepted that the primary objective of aid flow was for the people, and not the government. However, there is no system of accountability and transparency in place to monitor the management of aid, and expressed his doubt that aid was actually reaching the poor. He also questioned the justification of the ever increasing number of conditionalities associated with aid. He felt that there should be a mechanism to discover whether particular conditionalities were acceptable to the people. Though the aid flow has decreased significantly to about 2.8% of GDP, compared to 9-10 percent in the 1980s, he felt that the number of conditionalities has multiplied over the past years. He further noted that if one looks at any matrix of conditionality attached to a project or non-project aid, one will see that this statement is very true. He observed that the increase in the number of conditionalities originates from the weakness in project implementation and the poor design quality of reform initiatives undertaken by successive governments. He suggested that the conditionality packages attached to any aid should be discussed in the parliament to keep the people informed. He questioned the practice of using aid for political purpose, and noted that successive governments have attempted to influence people's opinion by asserting that developmental funds will not be channelled to the constituency if they did not vote for the government candidates.

Questioning the closure of Adamjee Jute Mills, *Dr Wajedul Islam Khan*, General Secretary of the Trade Union Centre maintained that when the donors prescribe any actions to be taken by the government, there is no suitable entity to verify the appropriateness and authenticity of such demands. He commented that although huge amounts of foreign aid are being received by the country, not even a quarter of these resources are reaching the poor people in the name of whom the aid was received.

*Professor Abu Ahmed*, Department of Economics of the University of Dhaka, also urged for making the conditions by donors public, and to let people know how much money is received under the respective conditions. He commented that the Government should not depend entirely on the donor's conditions and suggestions. Addressing the issue of demand for aid in all sectors, *Mr Rezaul Karim* suggested that the demand has to be met on the basis of equitable and appropriate distribution of the limited resources amongst contending sectors.

*Ms Khushi Kabir*, Coordinator of *Nijera Kori*, demanded the BDF deliberation be made public. A press release and a press briefing at the end of discussion is not enough. She also enquired about repayment mechanisms for soft term loans to private sector projects. Questioning the relevance of aid in the national economy, Former Ambassador *Major Gen A M S A Amin* commented that if foreign aid was stopped, the people at the grassroots level would stand to lose nothing; rather the development process would attain a new momentum.

### **3.4 Microcredit and the Accountability Issue of NGOs**

A very stimulating discussion took place at the dialogue on the issue of microcredit and the accountability of NGOs. Some participants were of the view that NGOs should be more accountable and transparent in their activities and financial reporting. Others demanded that there should not be any discrimination in the attitude of the government towards NGOs.

Taking part in the discussions, *Professor Abu Ahmed* commented that there was wide suspicion amongst the general public about the accountability of NGOs. This should be removed, and it is the duty of the government, as well as the NGOs themselves, to work towards this. He suggested that the NGO Bureau should be replaced by a fully fledged *NGO Regulatory Commission* and the NGOs should put up their elaborate and comprehensive balance sheet, that is, somewhat in line with the private banks. This will

enhance the transparency of NGO activities. However, *Mr S M Al-Husainy*, Chairman of *Swanirvar Bangladesh*, could not support the idea of a NGO regulatory commission as he believed that more regulations were likely to lead to more corruption. In place of this, he proposed that if the NGOs are going to work as partners and development agents for the government, then there has to be an *umbrella plan* for each sector in which the share of the work to be carried out by the government and NGOs should be laid out clearly.

Admitting that NGOs are public entities and need to be accountable too, *Ms Khushi Kabir* added that to ensure accountability, one should not create a system that will lead to more corruption and bribery, which in turn will lead to even more corruption and diversion of funds. Dwelling on the issue, *Dr Salahuddin Ahmed* of BRAC informed the audience that BRAC has always maintained transparency in its work and any one could familiarise themselves with BRAC's financial situation if they visited BRAC's website.

*Mr Rezaul Karim Chowdhury*, Secretary, SUPRO, criticised the involvement of NGOs in politics and asked the government to undertake an exercise to identify mechanisms for which NGOs activities can be channelled to enable them to perform their designated duties in a lawful manner.

### **3.5 Infrastructural Development**

A number of discussants stressed the key role of infrastructure in the development of the economy. They particularly emphasised the role of rural infrastructures as they felt that the rural economy was the mainstay of the overall development of a country such as Bangladesh.

*Mr Kutubuddin Ahmed*, President, MCCI, rose the issue by saying that a simple initiative of the government in the area of developing infrastructure may encourage and facilitate the private sector to contribute immensely in creating employment and income generating opportunities in the country. Recalling the government scheme for developing *Ashulia* road, *Mr Ahmed* observed that this single step on the government's part has persuaded the private sector to invest millions of dollars and has created employment opportunities for thousands of people in the neighbouring areas. Quoting from the Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO)'s report, he added that the development of public utility services, such as telephone, electricity, gas etc. is important for stimulating both foreign and local investment.

Underlining the role of rural resources in the national economy, former Finance Minister *Mr M Syeduzzaman* commented that aid money should be channeled more towards the development of infrastructure in the rural areas. Renowned journalist *Mr Ataus Samad* called upon both the government and private entrepreneurs to invest in rural infrastructures in view of its exceptionally high multiplier impacts on the economy.

### **3.6 Reform Initiatives for Development**

Discussants at the dialogue highlighted the importance of administrative and legal reforms to create a conducive environment for development. There was wide consensus among the participants regarding this issue, as everyone agreed that without an effectual reform initiative, the development process will not proceed effectively. *Mr M Syeduzzaman* commented that the local government reforms were essential for better management of foreign aid. To ensure that the flow of aid reaches the intended target group, administrative and legal reforms pertaining to the local government were extremely important, he added. *Mr Hasanul Haq Inu*, President, *Jatio Samajtantrik Dal*, criticised the government for their failure in implementing the reform agenda and for pursuing a donor driven agenda. He commented that there is no breakthrough in facilitating access to resources for the poor; rather the inherent structural injustices are creating more impoverished people. He stressed the importance of formulating a development programme which will go beyond the contemporary micro-credit centred programmes. He also emphasized the need for reforming the Election Commission in order that the next election is acceptable to all parties. He also stressed the need to make the national parliament more functional.

Agreeing with the need for an efficient reform initiative on the part of the government, *Ms Sultana Kamal* of *Ain-O-Shalish Kendra* criticised the government for its failure in separating the judiciary from the administration, for not establishing the office of the ombudsman, and for failing to set up a Anti Corruption Commission.



#### 4. RESPONSES FROM THE POLITICIANS

In response to the growing concerns about the confrontational politics, former Commerce Minister *Mr Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, MP* admitted that often politicians are blamed for violence, and practice of politics was bad in many ways. However, he argued that still there were some good politicians who did not patronise the '*Mastans*'. There are politicians who can be proud of being a public representative, who spoke for their people, he added. He requested the participants to appreciate the work of the good politicians, and emphasised the need to keep 'faith' in politics and politicians.

*Mr Chowdhury* put importance on private sector led growth, and noted that this was not the case at present. He informed the audience that most of the developed countries are now developed because of the contribution of their respective private sectors. He added that the private sector has been playing a major role in the development of roads, energy and telecommunications in those countries. He felt that the government should involve the private sector in the development of the country's infrastructure process.

Mr. Chowdhury acknowledged that the NGOs were doing good work for the development of the country. However, some NGOs were directly involved in politics he thought and advised those NGOs to join in politics as a political party. If certain NGOs were getting involved in politics, it could tarnish the image of other NGOs which were doing an exceptionally good job. It did not augur good for the country's development that NGOs were getting involved in politics. He stated that he had seen lot of donors patronising a section of the NGOs which were indulged in funding political campaigns.

About donor funds, *Mr Chowdhury* commented that in many instances, too many consultancy jobs were carried out and million of dollars were spent on reports, but very few of the recommendations had been implemented. Dwelling on the role of parliaments, he emphasised for a sustainable development process well functioning parliamentary committees were a must.

Supporting *Mr Khosru's* comments as regards politics, *Mr. Saber Hossain Chowdhury*, Political Secretary to the Hon'ble Leader of the Opposition, agreed that people should keep their 'faith' in the political system, especially on the political parties since these were the direct representatives of the people. Emphasising the role of parliament in a democracy, he agreed that indeed the parliamentary committees are functioning well. He also agreed that the NGOs should not be involved in politics. However, he added that the

government should not judge any NGO on the basis of the particular ideology they hold. Mentioning about some statistics from the keynote presentation on the donor contribution, he said that the role of foreign aid in the development process of Bangladesh is decreasing. However, at the same time there was a wide consensus and belief that donor's influence is increasing day by day. He suggested that zero dependence on foreign aid should be the nation's target.

Describing the importance put on donors' 'certificate' as a bad signal, he commented that the prime minister should not refer to the donors while addressing public meetings, and claim receipt of foreign aid as a testimony of donors' support towards government.

*Mr Saber Hossain Chowdhury* gave importance on the reform of the Election Commission and observed that a free and fair election would not be possible with a bureaucracy that had unfortunately been extremely politicized. He suggested that Bangladesh should have a long-term policy agenda targeted for 10 to 20 years, and should work towards the political and economic stability to ensure the sustainability and continuity of the policies, high quality of her civil service and effective and functioning decentralisation.

*Mr Mushfiqur Rahman*, MP, Chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Finance, in his speech, as the Special Guest, congratulated the CPD for arranging such an important event. *Mr Rahman* sounded optimistic and commented that despite the issues of bad governance, poverty and unstable political system; one should look at the positive side of the coin too. He noted that per capita income of the people has increased from US\$70 during the post-independence period to US\$ 410 at present. We should not be too pessimistic, he maintained. Rather we should think about how to promote constructive attitude of individual citizens and political parties, and how to encourage these. Putting emphasis on non-economic factor as a very important underlying factor of development, he observed that the goal of development should be social justice, employment generation and poverty reduction. In response to the criticism against the confrontational politics in the country, he commented that political parties, whether it is in the power or in the opposition, should play a constructive role in the development process.

Qualifying recent performance in domestic resource mobilization as very efficient, the Mr Rahman emphasised the need for further initiative in this regard and informed the audience that the Tax–GDP ratio in Bangladesh is still one of the lowest in South Asia. It

is the responsibility of the political parties to help the process of domestic resource mobilization, he added. Criticizing the role of political parties in the development process, he commented that the influence of donor community was on the rise precisely because often politicising were prone to curry favour of donors for political gains, not for the nation's development. Referring to dysfunctionality of institutions, Mr Rahman maintained that politicians could not shrug their responsibility since they are the leaders of nation's development process. In reply to the comment that economic development depends on political stability, Mr Rahman made the observation that the state of economy also was a cause of politics. A poor economy makes more poor people and creates unemployment which generates more *mastans* and leads to instability in politics, he argued. Appreciating the initiatives of some NGOs such as BRAC and Grameen Bank, he mentioned that some NGOs were diversifying their activities and this was an appropriate time for the country to form a *Regulatory Commission* for the NGOs. However, he suggested that the NGOs should be home grown and should not be dependent only on foreign aid and should not get involved in party politics.

## **5. RESPONSES FROM THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS**

*Ms .Christine Wallich*, World Bank Country Director in Bangladesh, initiated her comments by thanking the participants for their thought provoking discussion. She agreed with Finance Minister's comment about the high quality of the keynote presentation which she found both informative and educative.

About Bangladesh's current political situation, *Ms Wallich* felt that Bangladesh perhaps needed political unity between the major political parties. It is a challenge especially for the two major political parties, she observed. She suggested that the political parties should identify areas (such as policy reform, power, health and education) where they could reach a consensus. Political parties could fight on issues; it was their prerogative but should not fight on issues where they had held a consensus. She thought that the election system in Bangladesh is one of most expensive in the world. On an average, about 20 million taka was required to win a seat in the parliament. A country with a per capita income of just under U\$400 a year could ill afford such an expenditure.

She shared with the audience that in the World Bank Internal Rating System, Bangladesh had moved from a low performer to a middle performer. She thought that Bangladesh had a good record as far as macroeconomic fundamentals and performance were concerned;

in some areas particularly banking reform and privatization she had performed reasonably well. She felt that Bangladesh's development is very close to the Indian benchmark since the country has just outperformed five Indian states taken individually. She also informed the audience that Bangladesh has moved from a *low case* to a *base case* as far as World Bank was concerned and the Bank has labelled Bangladesh as a *base case* for the second year.

However, *Ms Wallich* observed that Bangladesh should put more emphasis on improving the quality of her governance. Apart from governance, Bangladesh was doing well in terms of many other indicators and that is why World Bank's lending programme has expanded in Bangladesh, she added.

About donor conditionalities, *Ms Wallich* said that World Bank is working with the government to help them to define and design reform at a technical level and provide the support after the reforms are initiated. In fact, donor community as a whole is trying to move away from the conditionality approach, she added. *Ms Wallich* wondered that a lot of people here in Bangladesh talks about the influence of World Bank on the government's activities, which she has not seen in any other country where she had worked in the past!

About the PRSP *Ms Wallich* invited suggestions from the participants on how to organise public debates on the relevant issues. One of the difficulties as regards the PRSP consultation process in Bangladesh was that not as many people do not read newspapers in Bangladesh and had no idea about the radio. But she agreed that serious discussion is needed around the PRSP process. She mentioned that the development partners are urging NGOs to become more self-reliant, and be less dependent on donors. She also maintained that donors encourage NGOs to create an endowment fund for themselves so that dependence on donors could be gradually brought down. About transparency in the NGOs work, she felt that NGOs should operate in an environment of transparency and accountability. NGOs should not work as the private businesses do; rather the profit of business carried by NGOs should be channelised for development purpose only.

Participating in the discussion, *Mr Gene V George*, USAID Chief of Mission said that though Bangladesh was doing very well, investment in the social sectors, especially in health and education, was still very low and in fact, to some extent it was below what is the norm even by developing countries standards. About NGO activities, he commented

that the donors have very good understanding about what the NGOs are doing and what they are intending to do with the money that the donors provide. He informed that a number of NGOs have not been given loans second time as their performance during the first time was not good enough. He thought that the notion about NGOs lacking accountability is a misperception. However, he requested all the involved parties not to blame each other rather to work with each other. He also suggested that both the NGOs and the private sector entrepreneurs should conduct their financial transactions in a transparent manner.

Danish Ambassador *H E Mr Niels Severin Munk* said that views are differed from donor to donor; principles which guide their work in the process of development cooperation also differed. He commented that Denmark will withdraw its assistance if it cannot ensure a well-functioning partnership with the government. He also pointed out that about 1% of Denmark's GDP goes to its development aid programmes and most of it was grants. Over the last three years, Denmark was also to fully utilise its commitment too. He informed that out of 15 partners, Denmark was placed fifth in terms of its involvement in Bangladesh. Getting aid is not a big problem for Bangladesh; rather the major problem for Bangladesh was proper utilisation of its received aid, he noted.

About the conditionality of aid, *Mr Munk* maintained that unlike the World Bank, Denmark didn't have any problem to make her views public as regards conditionalities.

*Mr Munk* said that since 2001, Denmark informed the government of Bangladesh on three occasions about cutting her assistance on the ground of corruption, but the government did not listen to that. He said that Denmark is involved in Bangladesh to support poverty alleviation. It is here because 65 million people still do not have access to basic needs and the nutrition level is still very low, he added. Supporting the comments of Danish Ambassador, the German Ambassador *H E Mr Dietrich Andreas* observed that different donors have different criterion for aid. He commented that the donors are spending the money of their taxpayers, and thus are responsible to their taxpayers and to their national parliaments. He agreed that the NGOs should follow some rules and regulations and should not be a party to political polarisation. However, he pointed out that NGOs have made commendable contribution to poverty reduction at grassroots level, which is a very important factor for bilateral support.

On the conditionality issue, the Australian High Commissioner *H E Ms Lorraine M Barker* noted that the issue of conditionality was not so an important for Australia in her relationship with recipient countries. However, she urged the audience to look at positive aspects of conditionality as in many cases this ensures that the recipient countries utilise the funds for what these are meant in the first place. Maintaining that Australia was a very good development partner of Bangladesh, *Her Excellency* reminded the house that Australia was the first western country to recognise Bangladesh after its independence in 1971.

## **6. RESPONSES FROM THE GOVERNMENT**

Finance and Planning Minister *Mr M Saifur Rahaman* commenced his speech by appreciating CPD for its initiatives to organise a pre-BDF dialogue. He profusely thanked the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) for organising this high level dialogue with wide representations from the country's civil society. He appreciated CPD's endeavour for presenting the civil society perspectives on the eve of the forthcoming BDF, where all major stakeholder groups from various parts and sectors of the country could voice their concerns, as *a galaxy of talents*. He termed the keynote presentation of *Bhattacharya* as excellent exposition of the current aid situation and BDF context and thought that the paper called for an in-depth discussion.

The Minister agreed with the central thesis of the paper and questioned widespread misconception that Bangladesh was a highly aid dependent country. He noted that 42% of its ADP financing is coming from the ODA. This share was on the decline, and it was mostly project aid; only 2.8% equivalent of GDP coming from foreign assistance at this moment, which is not very high, compared to other countries. ODA share in fiscal deficit as percentage of GDP is less than 3%, he added. So the conception that Bangladesh will not survive if foreign aid does not come is not a correct proposition. Instead, we should mobilize our internal resources in order to be self-reliant, he continued. The minister expressed his disappointment with the current internal resource mobilisation scenario. In this connection, he mentioned that tax and non-tax revenue together at present account for only 9 to 10% of GDP.

The Finance Minister drew attention of the audience to various reform measures initiated by the Ministry of Finance and Planning. Some of those initiatives, as he mentioned, were the civil service reform, various regulatory and institutional reforms, banking sector

reform and setting up of the Anti-Corruption Commission. He reminded the audience that all these initiatives have been under taken and pursued by the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Law provided the legal support to those.

He accused ongoing political agitation inside the country of the prime cause for slowing down the reform measures indicating that a position of a blind opposition on every issue undermines the efficacy of the reform process. A good reform process demands consensus on the part of both the major political parties and also an active support from the civil society, he continued. When the politics is confrontational or divisive, it is very difficult to have an environment for carrying out complicated reforms, he noted. Referring to comments made by some of the participants as regards reforms measures in Pakistan, the Minister argued that in democracy, reform process has to be more responsible than what is usually the case in autocracy and that is why it is more difficult to implement reforms in Bangladesh.

Supporting *Bhattacharya's* comment on the purpose of the BDF, the Finance Minister pointed out that the development forum is no more a forum for receiving aid pledges as on the early aid consortium meetings; rather it is now more of a deliberation on the policy and programme of the country. The forum is meant to convince firstly our society, and then in the process, the outsiders who are participating in our development process in their respective areas, that we have appropriate infrastructure, institution, governance, legal systems and regulatory framework in which a competitive private sector economy can work, the Minister maintained.

Putting emphasis on the role of the private sector in the national economy, the Minister added that with the existing regulatory institutional set up, absolute reliance on the private sector may not be very healthy at this stage, and may even be counter productive. The private sector has to be developed quite substantially and at the same time major regulatory and institutional reforms are required to evolve a private sector dominated economy, the Minister stressed. He commented that the psychology of business community and also the ethos of business ethics has to be changed if we are to go for a private sector-dominated development process. Putting emphasis on the need for privatisation, the Minister mentioned that at the moment the private sector was not ready to dominate the national economy. He added that there are important roles still to be played by the public institutions. In this regard, he mentioned the role to be played by the

banking sector. Despite the debates about the reform and privatisation of the banking sector, the Minister strongly felt that he is not fully comfortable with leaving every bank in the private sector. Dialogue is still on with the development partners as regards this. He maintained that people's interest will guide them in this respect.

With our own talent and our own internal resources, Bangladesh was capable of achieving a self-sustained development if good governance, good regulatory institutions and a healthy and non-confrontational political process was our culture. Expressing his faith in the new generation of entrepreneurs in Bangladesh, the Minister commented that they were capable of competing at the newly emerging business world because they were forward looking, risk-takers and resilient. The Minister thought that if they had the benefit of adequate resources, good business environment, functioning institutions and good governance to support them, our entrepreneurs could do many good things.

Highlighting the importance of development of infrastructure in the national economy, the Minister shared with the audience that sectors such as railway and power are still under-invested. These sectors demand a lot of resources to be invested. In this context, he contested the comments made by the FBCCI about the size of the ADP being bloated and pointed out that one should have an ambition to do better. Since Bangladesh was under-investing in the infrastructure this called for allocating more resources in the ADP for sectors such as this one. In conclusion, the Minister once again thanked *Bhattacharya* for an excellent presentation and expressed his readiness to discuss more thoroughly the issues that the keynote paper and the discussants had raised. He felt that the dialogue with the civil society must go on.

## **7. Concluding Remark**

In his concluding remarks, *Professor Rehman Sobhan* thanked the participants for their insights and comments and for their contribution to the civil society's consultation process. He concluded by hoping that the comments made by politicians, development partners and the civil stakeholders present at the dialogue will provide important inputs into the Development Forum Meeting 2004. He also hoped that both the GOB and the development partners will pay serious attention to the points raised in the keynote paper and the civil society representatives presented at the dialogue

*Annex 1*



**Dialogue on**  
**Bangladesh Development Forum 2004: Civil Society's Perspectives**  
**Date: May 5, 2004**

**List of Participants**  
*(in alphabetical order)*

<i>Mr A K Azad</i>	President, Bangladesh Chamber of Industries
<i>Mr A K M Shamsuddin</i>	Former President, (Foreign Investors Chamber of Commerce & Industry) FICCI and Chairman, Aventis
<i>Mr. A K M Shamsuddoha</i>	Managing Director, Dohatech New Media
<i>Major Gen (Retd.) A M S A Amin</i>	Former Ambassador & Member, Advisory Committee Bangladesh Awami League.
<i>Professor Abu Ahmed</i>	Department of Economics, University of Dhaka & Chairman, Shilpa Rin Sangstha.
<i>Dr Abul Hashem</i>	Section Chief (Retd), Development Research & Policy Analysis Division, UN-ESCAP, Bangkok
<i>Mr Afsar Karim Chowdhury</i>	Director, Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industries (DCCI)
<i>Professor Ali Ashraf</i>	Former Deputy Speaker, Bangladesh Jatiya Sangsad.
<i>Mr Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, MP</i>	Former Commerce Minister, Government of Bangladesh
<i>Professor Amirul Islam Chowdhury</i>	Former Vice Chancellor, Jahangirnagar University
<i>Ms Anne Bruzelius</i>	Counsellor, Embassy of Sweden
<i>Mr Ataus Samad</i>	Editor, Weekly Ekhn
<i>H E Ms Aud Lise Norheim</i>	Ambassador, Royal Norwegian Embassy
<i>Dr Badiul Alam Mazumdar</i>	Country Director, The Hunger Project, Bangladesh
<i>Ms Christina M. Rozario</i>	Deputy Director, Impact Foundation, Bangladesh
<i>Ms Christine Wallich</i>	Country Director, The World Bank
<i>Mr Cleveland L Charles</i>	Chief Economic and Commercial Officer Embassy of United States of America
<i>H E Dietrich Andreas</i>	<i>Ambassador</i> Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany
<i>Mr Dundas McCullough</i>	Counselor, Political and Economic Affairs Embassy of USA.
<i>Mr Fazle Rabbi</i>	Senior Information Officer Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh
<i>Mr Fazlur Rahman</i>	Secretary, Planning Division, Government of Bangladesh

<i>Mr Gene V George</i> <i>Dr Hameeda Hossain</i>	Chief of Mission, USAID Founder Member, Ain O Shalish Kendra (ASK)
<i>Mr Hasanul Haq Inu</i>	President, Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (JSD)
<i>Mr Herman Parfenov</i>	Head of Trade & Economics Department Embassy of Russian Federation
<i>Mr Ildar Gibadiukov</i>	Third Secretary, Embassy of Russian Federation
<i>Mr. Imtiyaz Hussain</i>	Chairman, Imtiyaz Hussain & Co.
<i>Mr. Jahangir Bin-Alam</i>	Secretary, Foreign Investors Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FICCI)
<i>Mr Johan Norqvist</i>	First Secretary, Embassy of Sweden
<i>Mr K Z Islam</i>	Managing Director Nirman International Limited
<i>Mr Kamran T Rahman</i>	Vice-President, Bangladesh Employers' Federation
<i>Dr Kaniz Siddique</i>	Associate Professor, Department of Economics North South University
<i>Dr Kazi Saleh Ahmed</i>	Former Vice Chancellor, Jahangirnagar University
<i>Ms Khushi Kabir</i>	Member, CPD Board of Trustees and Coordinator, Nijera Kori
<i>Mr Kutubuddin Ahmed</i>	President, Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (MCCI)
<i>H E Ms Lorraine M Barker</i>	High Commissioner, Australian High Commission
<i>Mr M A Sattar Bhuyan</i>	Economic Advisor, Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh.
<i>Mr M Aminuzzaman</i>	Managing Director National Credit & Commerce Bank Ltd
<i>Mr M Anis Ud Dowla</i>	President, Bangladesh Employers' Federation
<i>Mr M Hafizuddin Khan</i>	Former Advisor to the Caretaker Government
<i>Dr M Mostafa Zaman</i>	National Professor
<i>Mr M Saifur Rahman, MP</i>	Hon'ble Minister for Finance and Planning Government of Bangladesh
<i>Mr M Syeduzzaman,</i>	Member, CPD Board of Trustees, Former Finance Minister and Chairman, Bank Asia
<i>Ambassador M M Rezaul Karim</i>	Member, Advisory Committee, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)
<i>Mr Mahbubur Rahman</i>	President, International Chamber of Commerce – Bangladesh (ICC-B)

<i>Mr Masahiko Kiya</i>	Counsellor, Head of Economic and Development Cooperation, Embassy of Japan
<i>Mr Matiul Islam</i>	Former Finance Secretary, Government of Bangladesh.
<i>Mr Md Aziz Khan</i>	Chairman, Summit Group of Companies
<i>Mr Md Quddus Khan</i>	Joint Secretary (Banking), Ministry of Finance Government of Bangladesh
<i>Dr Mirza Azizul Islam</i>	Chairman, Securities Exchange Commission
<i>Professor Mohammad Masum</i>	Department of Economics, Jahangirnagar University
<i>Mr Mushfiqur Rahman, MP</i>	Chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Finance.
<i>Mr Mustafa Mohiuddin</i>	Director General, Export Promotion Bureau
<i>H E Mr Niels Severin Munk</i>	Ambassador, Royal Danish Embassy
<i>Dr Quazi Mesbahuddin Ahmed</i>	Member (GED), Planning Commission, Government of Bangladesh
<i>Dr Rajani Alexander</i>	First Secretary (Development) Canadian High Commission
<i>Mr Reazul Islam</i>	Programme Officer, Embassy of Sweden
<i>Mr Rezaul Karim Chowdhury</i>	Secretary, SUPRO (Shusasan-er Jonno Prochar Ovijan)
<i>Ms Rezwana Rasheed</i>	Department of Sociology, University of Dhaka
<i>Mr Robert Beadle</i>	Head of Development Cooperation Canadian High Commission
<i>Ms Rokia A Rahman</i>	Former Advisor, Caretaker Government and Chairman, Airlinks
<i>Mr S A Chowdhury</i>	Managing Director, Jamuna Bank Ltd.
<i>Mr S M Al-Husainy</i>	Former Chairman, PSC and Chairman, Swanirvar Bangladesh
<i>Mr Saber Hossain Chowdhury</i>	Former Deputy Minister and Political Secretary to the Hon'ble Leader of the Opposition
<i>Dr Salehuddin Ahmed</i>	Deputy Executive Director, BRAC
<i>Mr Samson H Chowdhury</i>	Chairman, Square Groups
<i>Ms Shaheena Sultana</i>	Development Programme Specialist, USAID
<i>Ms Shamim Hamid</i>	Principal Officer, UNDP
<i>Advocate Sultana Kamal</i>	Executive Director, Ain-O-Shalish Kendra

<i>Mr. Syed Manzur Elahi</i>	Member, CPD Board of Trustees, Former Advisor, Caretaker government & Chairman, APEX Group of Industries
<i>Mr Toru Shibuichi</i> <i>Dr Wajedul Islam Khan</i>	Country Director, Asian Development Bank (ADB) General Secretary, Trade Union Kendro

**List of Journalists**  
*(in alphabetical order)*

<i>Mr A Hussain</i>	The Daily Rupali
<i>Ms Badrun Nahar</i>	The Executive Times
<i>Mr Faruque Ahmed</i>	Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS)
<i>Mr Jamal Uddin</i>	The Daily Ittefaq
<i>Mr K Khandokar</i>	The Daily Manabzamin
<i>Ms Mahfuza Moslehi</i>	News Network
<i>Mr Masudul Karim Biswas</i>	The Bangladesh Observer
<i>Mr Md Azizur Rahman</i>	The Dakpeon
<i>Mr Mhawaza Moinuddin</i>	The New Age
<i>Mir Mostafizur Rahman</i>	The Independent
<i>Mr Monjur Mahmud</i>	The Daily Star
<i>Mr Motahar Hossain</i>	The Ajadi
<i>Mr Nurul Hasan Khan</i>	The Dinkal
<i>Ms Parveen Ahmed</i>	Correspondent, AP
<i>Mr Rashidul Islam</i>	Dhaka Correspondent, Radio Tehran
<i>Mr S M Mezanur Rahman</i>	Staff Reporter, The Bangladesh Today
<i>Mr S R Ratan</i>	Staff Reporter, NNB
<i>Mr S Rehman</i>	The Daily Muktokantho
<i>Mr Salahuddin Bablu</i>	The Daily Inquilab
<i>Mr Sayadul Islam</i>	The Daily Ittefaq
<i>Mr Shahnewaz</i>	The Daily Jugantor
<i>Mr Shakhawat Hossain</i>	The News Today
<i>Ms Sharmeen Rinvy</i>	Channel-I
<i>Mr Shawkat Masum</i>	Prothom Alo

*Mr Shohel Siddiquee*

*Mr Tareq Al Naser*

*Mr Zia Rahman*

*Mr Ziaul Huq Mizan*

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Sr Staff Reporter, Financial Express

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