

JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA

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Press Release

JMI organizes Online Lecture on ‘The Bangladesh Growth Story: Achievement and Challenges’

The MMAJ Academy of International Studies organised an Online Lecture on the topic “The Bangladesh Growth Story: Achievement and Challenges” on 13th July 2021. Dr. Sreeradha Datta, Senior Fellow and Head of Neighborhood Studies at the Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi delivered the lecture.

Prof. Ajay Darshan Behera, Officiating Director, MMAJ-AIS welcomed the speaker and the participants. In his introductory remarks he introduced the theme of the lecture and highlighted the exceptional GDP growth rate of Bangladesh. While commending the steady economic growth of Bangladesh, he also expressed reservations with respect to the challenges faced by Bangladesh: its political instability, the lack of a political opposition and economic challenges like over dependence on export of garments among others.

Dr. Datta after providing a historical background noted that the past fifty years have been a remarkable journey for Bangladesh in terms of its economy, as it has successfully been able to achieve 6 percent growth even under difficult times. Although in its initial years, it received aid from foreign countries but recently it has provided aid to Sri Lanka, which is a testimony to Bangladesh’s growth from a basket case to a vibrant economy. Bangladesh has also shown impressive performance in terms of health, education and female literacy. It has managed to reduce poverty on a large scale, but the worries are the widening inequality between the rich and the poor.

The reason for the recent economic upturn in Bangladesh is manifold. The export driven garment factories, dynamism of small holding peasants, growth of entrepreneurship, digital economic growth that even provides global services all these have contributed towards sustaining the economy. The non-government sector is contributing hugely to the Human Development Index. Revolutionary changes have occurred in gender relations and the role of NGOs in it is very significant. The growth in remittances is hugely supporting the Bangladeshi economy as many Bangladeshis are working all across the world. Towards, the end of her lecture, Dr. Datta raised doubts whether this Bangladeshi growth model is sustainable in the long run as governance remains one of the major challenges to Bangladesh’s future.

There is a historical legacy to these challenges. Soon after Bangladesh achieved independence, there were huge challenges particularly in the economy. The assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was a big setback to the political process. But Mujib’s role in introducing single party rule leading to a streak of authoritarianism created distortions in the political process. Though later multi-party democracy was introduced in Bangladesh, but this only strengthened personal animosity among the political leaders. Bangladesh over time has drifted from the inclusive democracy that was the vision at the beginning to an exclusionary democracy. Though periodic elections take place in Bangladesh, she argued that it is the deep-seated rivalry between the two political families, which has led to the dysfunction of democracy in Bangladesh.

The lecture was well attended by several participants. It was followed by a question-and-answer session where the participants raised a number of questions. Prof. Ajay Darshan Behera, Officiating

Director, MMAJ-AIS thanked the speaker for her critical observations and insights and the participants for their enthusiastic participation.

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