

Working Paper: Innovation Adda with Dr. Syed Muntasir Mamun

Introduction

In today's dynamic global landscape, innovation plays a pivotal role in economic growth, sustainable development, and international collaboration. An Innovation Adda recently brought together two distinguished experts: Mr. Ashfaq Zaman, Advisor for Strategic Communications at a2i, and Dr. Syed Muntasir Mamun, Director General of International Trade, Investment & Technology at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

This working paper captures the essence of their dialogue, focusing on the role of innovation in diplomacy, ecosystems, technology transfer, sustainability, and policy development. It aims to disseminate their collective insights and inspire global collaboration for a more innovative future.

Dr. Syed Muntasir Mamun's Perspective

1. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs aims to be both proactive and reactive in its role within the government, reflecting a paradigm shift in their approach.
2. The government is keen on harnessing the innovation potential of its youth and productive capabilities to elevate the nation's standing.
3. The Ministry's core focus is on protecting, promoting, and projecting national interests, with a vision to become a "Smart Ministry."
4. The goal is to empower Bangladeshi citizens worldwide by providing digital access to government services, fostering a sense of connection and belonging. Dr. Syed Muntasir Mamun said, "Almost 1.5 crore Bangladeshi people are out of the country, can we give our whole state operators in a small box, in their pocket/finger tips, so that they can say that 'The Bangladeshi Government is within my fingertips'. The people will understand that the Bangladeshi government did not forget them, it is with them, anywhere they go."

5. Collaboration with a2i and the ICT division is crucial to augment their capabilities and expand services internationally.
6. Government resources are being used to develop critical infrastructure, ensuring transparency and accountability in decision-making.
7. The implementation of E-nothi and D-nothi, along with MyGov, will simplify embassy connections for immigrants.
8. The Ministry seeks to bridge the gap between innovation and the international market by creating alternative mechanisms.
9. Combating corruption is a priority, with a focus on limiting the possibility horizon and preventing money laundering.
10. The Mission Activity Tracker enhances capabilities, rights, and powers rather than merely tracking activities.
11. The Ministry receives a significant number of reports weekly, aiding in future planning and protection.
12. Access to digital resources is deemed a fundamental human right, essential for empowering individuals and closing the digital divide. He added, “Connectivity is something that not only connects with people or businesses but also systems, processes, cultures and organizations.”

Mr. Ashfaq Zaman's Perspective

1. Bangladesh has transitioned from being known for disaster and poverty to being recognized as an innovator in digital transformation.
2. Next-level diplomacy involves data augmentation and prediction, using data to anticipate economic trends and threats in a global context.
3. The Innovation Corner at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs serves as a source of inspiration for the youths of the country and astonishment for the ambassadors and foreign dignitaries.

4. The country's transition from BPO to KPO signifies its growth in knowledge process outsourcing and need the support of MOFA and the missions worldwide.
5. DPG (Digital Public Good) is a crucial concept, with Bangladesh leading the way and models can be promoted and replicated globally.
6. Technology is now a basic right, emphasizing the importance of digital inclusion for marginalized populations.
7. The "Zero Digital Divide" initiative is addressing future challenges and creating solutions for global digital equity. Ashfaq Zaman added, digital inequality is headed towards being one of the biggest problems of the future & “Zero Digital Divide” is actually addressing the future problem and creating solutions for that problem now. This is leadership”
8. E-Quality is a model that champions digital rights and equality through first understanding & deep level research, by sharing the technology or tech transfer for proven solutions, and by funding the agendas towards zero digital divide.
9. Synergy among ministries is essential to solving each other's challenges and fostering innovation.
10. The Innovation Corner is open to all, inviting contributions and support from the nation and partners.
11. The national flag symbolizes not just the nation but also the aspirations, frugal innovation, and knowledge capacity of the people. Ashfaq Zaman said, “We hope that when people see our flag, it is not only the flag it is the aspirations of the people of Bangladesh. It is the frugal innovation of our people, it is the knowledge capacity of the people. That can also be disseminated from the flag.”
12. The objective is to disseminate these ideals internationally, contributing to a brighter, more innovative future for all.



Conclusion

The insights from Dr. Syed Muntasir Mamun and Ashfaq Zaman emphasize the pivotal role of innovation in diplomacy, development, perception building and global collaboration. Their perspectives underscore the importance of harnessing technology for inclusivity, sustainability, and accountability. As we move forward, it is essential to advocate for a more innovative and connected world, where digital rights and opportunities are extended to all.