



Working Paper on

# Smart Bangladesh Roundtable- The Youth Perspective



## Introduction

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, in collaboration with a2i, hosted the "Smart Bangladesh Roundtable Discussion for Youth Perspective" on September 12, 2023. The event featured Foreign Minister Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen, MP, as the Chief Guest and saw active participation from senior officials of the Foreign Office and a2i.

The primary objective of this roundtable was to engage the youth of Bangladesh in envisioning and contributing to the creation of a smarter, more innovative nation. It also marked the introduction of the Smart Bangladesh Olympiad, a significant milestone in Bangladesh's commitment to fostering youth engagement and innovation. The event brought together young representatives from diverse educational backgrounds, including those from public, private, polytechnic, national universities, and madrasas. It aimed to empower youth to actively participate in impactful policymaking dialogues, ensuring that their voices play a pivotal role in shaping the future of the nation. This initiative recognizes the youth not only as participants but as the most significant stakeholders in the journey towards a smarter Bangladesh.



## Key Remarks and Insights

### Honorable Foreign Minister Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen's Address

In his keynote address, the Honorable Foreign Minister, Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen, underscored the paramount significance of the youth demographic as the primary driving force behind the nation's progress. Dr. Momen articulated his conviction that the innovative ideas and perspectives emanating from the youth of Bangladesh constitute invaluable assets for the nation. He articulated, "I aspire to see a Bangladesh where our young generation is received with due respect when they visit foreign embassies. I envision a scenario where they are welcomed cordially, and foreign nations extend invitations to them with honor. Such is the Bangladesh I envisage." Dr. Momen accentuated Bangladesh's unwavering resilience and called for a collaborative approach aimed at ushering the nation into an era of prosperity. He further elucidated, "The transformation achieved in the past 14 years is nothing short of remarkable. Drawing upon my experience as an educator, I conducted a comparative analysis spanning the periods 1975-1990 and 1990-2005. During the former period, the average GDP stood at 3.20, whereas the current average GDP stands at 6.80."

The Foreign Minister shed light on the government's multifaceted initiatives designed to ameliorate the lives of its citizens and encouraged the burgeoning intellectual capital of Bangladesh to step forward with distinctive ideas, thereby contributing to the enhancement of the nation's economy, society, and overall development. He expounded, "Bangladesh should rightfully assume the role of a global hub. This vision is not unfounded, for we possess a dynamic and astute younger generation that has showcased exceptional achievements when afforded opportunities abroad. Bengali nationals can readily channel their efforts towards the betterment of our homeland even while residing abroad."

Notably, Dr. Momen emphasized the "Smart Bangladesh 2041" initiative as a strategic pathway for the younger generation to establish their priorities and ardently pursue meaningful advancements in the domains of innovation and technology. He proclaimed, "Where there is a will, there is a way. Our esteemed Prime Minister has provided us with a comprehensive roadmap for the realization of our aspirations. The initial step towards achieving the status of a developing nation in 2021 has materialized to a considerable extent. We are resolute in our commitment to reducing the poverty rate to a mere 3% by 2030, and by 2041, we envision the realization of a Smart Bangladesh. To this end, I have formulated a series of strategic packages during my tenure as Foreign Minister, all aimed at facilitating the attainment of our Smart Bangladesh objectives."

In closing, Dr. Momen imparted, "Today's lesson underscores the importance of self-belief. The greater the dream, the greater the achievement."



## **Md. Abul Kalam Azad's Remarks**

Md. Abul Kalam Azad, Former Principal Secretary & Co-Chair of Smart Bangladesh Network (SBN), attended the event as a Special Guest. He emphasized that this initiative represents a significant step towards a smarter Bangladesh. He engaged in a conversation with the youthful participants, inquiring about their perspectives on the concept of a technologically advanced Bangladesh and their sentiments toward it. Following their responses, he imparted, “You are going to be the soldiers of Smart Bangladesh” He proceeded to elucidate the strategic framework known as 'Towards Prosperity 2023,' wherein he expounded upon the overarching vision for the years 2030, 2041, and 2071.

“By 2030, we aim to attain the Sustainable Development Goals, and by 2041, our aspiration is for Bangladesh to have ascended to the status of a developed nation,” articulated Mr. Abul Kalam Azad, who harbors these ambitions. Addressing the budding intellects present, he stated, “You shall witness the unfolding of the future—first in 2041, and subsequently in 2071, as the march toward 2100 continues.”

He stressed the importance of active youth involvement in the nation's success and highlighted the Smart Bangladesh Olympiad as a catalyst for innovation.

## **Dr. Syed Muntasir Mamun's Presentation**

Dr. Syed Muntasir Mamun, Director General IT and ICT wing and Chief Innovation Officer of the Foreign Office, highlighted the Foreign Ministry's endeavors in frontier technology and innovation. He reaffirmed the Ministry's commitment to fostering a culture of innovation within the Ministry and beyond. Dr. Mamun mentioned the ICT Wing's efforts in Digital Public Infrastructure initiatives and its global presence. He welcomed more direct youth participation in the Ministry's developmental initiatives, such as the "Innovation corner" and "iLab."

## **Mr. Ashfaq Zaman's Remarks**

Mr. Ashfaq Zaman, Strategic Communications Advisor of a2i and Coordinator, MOFA-a2i iLab, moderated the discussion. He emphasized that this event signifies a paradigm shift, where the focus is not only on working for the youth but working with the youth. He highlighted the diverse representation of participants from polytechnics, madrasas, national universities, public-private universities, and the impressive gender balance. He stressed the commitment of a2i and the Foreign Ministry to foster a culture of innovation to promote Bangladeshi youth locally and globally.

## **Smart Bangladesh Olympiad Presentation**

The event also featured a comprehensive presentation on the Smart Bangladesh Olympiad by Mr. Sajid Mahbub, Chief Operating Officer of Bangladesh Brand Forum. Their presentation covered the objectives, plans, and potential impact of the Olympiad, captivating the audience's attention.



## Conclusion

The "Smart Bangladesh Roundtable Discussion for Youth Perspective" marks a pivotal moment in Bangladesh's journey towards a smarter, more innovative nation. The active involvement of youth and the introduction of the Smart Bangladesh Olympiad symbolize the nation's commitment to harnessing the creativity and potential of its youth. This initiative reaffirms that the youth are not just participants but the most significant stakeholders in shaping the future of Bangladesh. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a2i look forward to fostering a culture of innovation and collaboration, ensuring that Bangladesh's perception locally and globally reflects its commitment to innovation and youth engagement.

## Schedule for the Event

**Date:** September 12, 2023

**Time:** 12:00 P.M.

**Location:** Conference Hall, 1st Floor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dhaka

Time	Event	Description
12:00 pm - 12:05 pm	Opening Remarks	Speech by Dr. Syed Muntasir Mamun, DG, Trade Investment & ICT, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
12:05 pm - 12:15 pm	Presentation on Smart Bangladesh Olympiad	Presentation by Shariful Islam, Founder & Managing Director, Bangladesh Brand Forum, and Sajid Mahbub, Chief Operating Officer, Bangladesh Brand Forum.
12:15 pm - 12:45 pm	Roundtable Discussion - Youth Insights on Smart Bangladesh	25+ representation from national, public, madrassah and private universities from around the country to share their ideas and expectations regarding Smart Bangladesh.
12:45 pm - 12:55 pm	MoFA Innovation Adda Showcase	5 innovators featured from MoFA's Innovation Adda to share their innovations & insights.
12:55 pm - 01:05 pm	Special Remarks	Speech by Mr. Abul Kalam Azad, Former Principal Secretary, Vice Chair - Smart Bangladesh Network; highlighting the way forward for Smart Bangladesh and Smart Olympiad initiative.



01:05 pm - 01:10 pm	Q&A and Interactions from the Youth with the Honorable Chief Guest	
01:10 pm - 01:25 pm	Remarks from the Honorable Chief Guest	Speech by Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen, MP Honorable Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Event Concludes with 'Thank You' note by the Moderator		

## Participants

Innovators		
Serial	Guest Name	Designation & Company
1	Nafiz Imtiaz	Team Leader, Mars Rover, Team Interplanetar BUET
2	Nayem Hossain Saikat	Team leader, BracU Duburi
3	Joy Borua Lablu	Founder, Robolife Technologies
4	Redwan Ferdous	General secretary and country representative, WRO Bangladesh
5	Inam Uz Zaman	Product Group Lead, Intelligent Machines Limited

Participants		
Serial	Guest Name	University Name
1	Md. Abdullah Al Mahin	University Of Dhaka
2	Jahid Hasan Rony	DUET
3	Md. Samiul Islam	Stamford University Bangladesh
4	Saiful Islam	Jahangirnagar University



5	Abir Hossain Nishan	Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology
6	Mohitul Islam Khan	Jagannath University
7	Wazed Ahmad Sohan	Army-IBA
8	Saiara Ibnat Piya	Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP)
9	Asif Kabir	North South University (NSU)
10	Arpita Ahasan Arpi	Manarat International University
11	Khairul Sadman Farabi	Brac University
12	Dewan Babri	Daffodil International University
13	Pritvi Bhowmick	East West University
14	Zarin Tasnim Khan	Eden Mohila College
15	Aynan Salsabila Lamisa	Tejgaon College
16	Md.Shaif Shahriar Zidan	United International University(UIU)
17	Samin Yasar Rafi	American International University Bangladesh
18	Sk.H.M Aftab	National University (Dhaka State College)
19	Shabbir Ahmed	Independent University,Bangladesh
20	Md. Ehsan Habib	Shahjalal University Of Science And Technology
21	MD Shahriar Arafat Swapnil	International Islamic University Chittagong



22	Ehsanul Islam Hasan	National Institute of Textile Engineering and Research (NITER)
23	Belal Hasan Shawon	Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University
24	Abdur Rahman Rahim	IBA, University of Rajshahi
25	M Mohammad Arfanul Hoque Joy	University of Chittagong
26	Mahmudul Hossain	Patuakhali Science and Technology University
27	Karobi Sultana	Dhaka Mohila Polytechnic Institute
28	Rounok Mahmud	Tamirul Millat Kamil Madrasa
29	Aminul Islam	Darunnazat Siddikia Kamil Madrasah
30	S.M Shakaout Srabon	University Of Barishal
31	Mahfuza Raihana	Brac University
32	Faiza Mehzabin Preounty	Jahangirnagar University



## Pictures

