

Independence Day, 2010 - Special Seminar

Digital Bangladesh – Prospect, Implementation Challenges, and the Role of Bangladeshi Expatriates in Australia

The seminar was organised in two sessions and coordinated by Dr Zakia Hossain.

Session one: Paper presentation.

Session two: Q & A and Open discussion on the role of Bangladeshi expatriate in Australia.

Two papers were presented in session 1. These are:

Presentation 1: Socio-economic aspects of Digital Bangladesh - by Professor Atique Islam, Dean, Faculty of Business and Law, Edith Cowan University, Perth.

Presentation 2: Challenges of e-Government implementation in Bangladesh - by Ms Nahid Rashid, Monash University and Shams Rahman, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia

Abstract – Presentation 1:

Digitisation aims at making government more citizen oriented (G2C), promoting efficiency in business to business (B2B) and business to customer (B2C) dealings, and coherent and synchronized approach to government (G2G).

Digitisation provides better services at lower cost as the electronic transactions cost a fraction of the manual, (paper based) transactions. It saves the time, effort and cost of traveling in keeping records of activities and information which can be accessed from any corner of the globe 24 hours a day and 365 days. Digitisation produces transparency and accountability as the policies and procedures are available online, therefore accessible to anyone. An audit trail is available for an application to the completion of a transaction. Therefore, digitization reduces corruption as most of the official activities will be done online. Since the process reduces human involvement and thus minimizes the chances of corruption. Digitisation increases the reach of the government through uploading the information into the system. Diverse spheres of citizen life, vehicle registration, passports, social welfare, community health, literacy can be serviced through the electronic medium. It creates real-time community feedback on a continuous basis on the policies, programs and performance of government departments. Citizens can also actively participate in the political process of the country with consummate ease. Spread of technology will be rapid through

digitization (community networks) as this will spread the information technology to the masses. Bangladesh will need to have a concerted effort to develop ICT and e-literacy among its citizens. A clear program for human resource development in this area would be needed. Clear and comprehensive laws and policies for regulation of the ICT environment must be developed. In relation to the development of ICT infrastructure, partnership between private and public sectors should be encouraged.

Leadership in higher education and research institutions must be in constant interaction with business and government leaders to ensure that development is demand oriented and sustainable. It is also absolutely essential that the professional requirements for ICT graduates and recognition principles for professional membership are clearly specified and diligently observed.

Prof. Islam also emphasizes the other critical issues regarding the role and importance of digitization. He suggests to avoid the emergence of an ICT “haves” and “have not”’s in the country. This can be done by developing community facilities for free internet access in public places such as markets, social clubs etc. Suitable laws must be enacted and enforced to safeguard the integrity of the system and privacy of citizen information.

Abstract - Presentation 2:

Presentation 2: Challenges of e-Government implementation in Bangladesh - by Ms Nahid Rashid, Department of Management, Monash University and Shams Rahman, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia

There are evidences that a successful electronic-Government (e-Government) can facilitates speedy, transparent, and effective interaction with citizens, businesses and other stakeholders. Recently, many developing nations have taken initiatives to adopt e-Government. However, the accomplishment of e-Government is slow. Studies suggest that a coordinated effort by political leaders, bureaucrats, and private entrepreneurs is important to facilitate the growth of e-Government. The purpose of this study is to investigate the critical determinants associated with the implementation of e-Government in Bangladesh. Based on extant literature, a framework for e-Government implementation has been proposed with twelve determinants and four higher-level constructs. Data were collected against these determinants using 65 respondents who belong to four categories of organisations such as government policy makers and public officials, development partners, implementing agencies, and ICT task-force members. An importance-commitment matrix (ICM) analysis is used to assess the criticality of determinants.

The results indicate that currently there is a high degree of political commitment, and administrative leadership to implement e-Government in Bangladesh. What is required now is to improve the human resources for the executing agencies, and

develop awareness of both members of public and implementation agencies through education in the field. The results also indicate that the executing agencies must develop right organisational structure for e-Government implementation and formulate appropriate regulatory framework for monitoring the usage and abuse of the system. Previous studies in e-Government were conducted mainly using case study methodology and qualitative approach. This is one of the rare studies which apply a quantitative approach using data from four categories of stakeholders. The findings of this study can be applied in other developing nations.

Session two:

The participants of the seminar put forward a number of constructive suggestions which fall into the following categories;

1. Hardware distribution - Acquisition of computer hardware and distribution among educational institutions in rural Bangladesh. Government can take initiative to create hubs in various parts of the country.
2. Soft skill transfer - Creating an environment within the government system to attract the expatriate Bangladeshi IT experts and to maximise their contribution.
3. Joint applied research and education.
4. Constitute a Digital Bangladesh Committee – the aims are as follows:
 - a. Develop an inventory of experts and their areas of expertise
 - b. Identify a contact point in Bangladesh
