



Media News Report_Governance and Development - the Way Forward for Bangladesh

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UK minister for adhering to democratic values

HT Imam sees governance as biggest challenge

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PM's political affairs adviser HT Imam speaking at a seminar on 'Governance and

Development—the Way forward for Bangladesh’ hosted by Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh (PRI) at a city hotel on Sunday. — FE Photo

A visiting British state minister attached on Sunday importance to Bangladesh’s adherence to democratic values as the country graduates to the middle income status.

Mr Field said both the nations will be able to achieve their future goals if they stay true to the democratic values.

“As a friend of Bangladesh I profoundly hope that, as Bangladesh graduates to a middle income status, it will remain true to its democratic values,” he said.

He said Bangladesh’s general election held in December was not up to the standard.

“... It gives me no pleasure to say this, but I fear the Parliamentary elections which took place here in December did not meet this standard,” Mark Field, minister of state for Foreign and Commonwealth Office, said.

His comments came at a seminar on “Governance and Democracy- the way forward for Bangladesh.”

The Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh (PRI) organised the seminar in Dhaka.

Calling the government ‘for a full, credible and transparent resolution of all complaints,’ the minister said the notion of choice is crucial in any healthy democracy.

“Without it, there is a risk that voters might seek other ways of achieving the changes they want. Ultimately, that could pose a much greater threat to stability than allowing them to express their views through democratic channels” he said.

Mr Field laid importance on having a political opposition in place, which is capable and willing to hold the government to account and offer an alternate view.

“... It is so vital to allow space for a vibrant civil society, through which the people — and

especially young people — can channel their energies, and indeed their frustrations, within the law,” he said.

That means upholding Bangladesh’s fine tradition of allowing people to voice dissent and express themselves freely.

He also stressed the need for allowing the media to do its job of holding the powerful to account for upholding the transparency and credibility of democratic institutions, and bearing down on corruption.

“This really matters, because the strength and accountability of our institutions, and the confidence that they inspire in investors, are also crucial to our democracies — and to our economies,” he added.

He said there are now some 600,000 British citizens of Bangladeshi heritage, and the UK government greatly values their contribution to all walks of British life.

Lauding Bangladesh’s recent development, Mr Field said Bangladesh can be proud of the huge progress it has made in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

On the UK-Bangladesh joint cooperation, the minister said both the nations are working together in many areas like-to address the climate change issue, to tackle the evils of human trafficking and to improve the aviation standard.

“Something else we share is our diversity — in both Bangladesh and the UK, people of different backgrounds — Muslims and non-Muslims - live side by side. In our increasingly divided world, we must continue to promote this model of co-existence and inclusion,” he said.

In this regard, he mentioned the incident of killing of innocent Muslims in New Zealand and said their deaths and the narrow escape of Bangladeshi cricket team, were yet another tragic reminder of the dangers of hatred and extremism.

“But the response to the attacks — both from the local Muslim community, and wider society

— has also been a reminder that people overwhelmingly reject this hatred, and instead want to bridge divides, heal divisions and promote understanding”.

The UK junior minister also urged the Bangladeshis to avail the quality higher education offered by the British Universities and suggested allowing UK educational institutions to open their campuses in Bangladesh.

“That is why one of the things I shall be discussing with my counterparts on this visit is the possibility of opening the local education market to greater competition,” he added.

Speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister’s political advisor HT Imam identified governance as the biggest challenge for the country.

“Our major challenge is providing good governance and maintaining steady growth and development,” Mr Imam said.

“By good governance, we simply do not mean maintaining good law and order — but we also mean zero tolerance against militancy, drugs and corruption,” he added.

He asked the UK government to pressurise Myanmar to take back the Rohingya refugees currently staying in Bangladesh.

“I would request the UK government to put pressure on the government of Myanmar so that eventually they take back their own population,” Mr Imam said.

“The Rohingya are the citizens of Myanmar. The Myanmar government has to take them back. We cannot keep them here for an indefinite time,” he added.

The PM’s political adviser noted the environmental disaster and the economic pressure put on by Rohingya refugees are ‘enormous’.

The local industries in Cox’s Bazar, including salt, tourism and fisheries, are severely affected by the influx of these refugees.”

“The cost to Bangladesh is enormous. You cannot compensate it with external assistance, no matter how much you try,” he said.

Prime Minister’s economic adviser Dr. Mashiur Rahman, in his speech, highlighted the plight of the local readymade garments manufacturers in meeting the international safety standards.

“Currently, our RMG industry is having problem with issues like safety standards, working environment and wages,” he said.

“But when the prices are going down and there is an emphasis that we must comply with these standards, it becomes a little hard on the traders,” Mr Rahman added.

PRI chairman Dr. Zaidi Sattar called for forging Commonwealth trade and investment partnership for boosting trade and investment among the Commonwealth countries.

“It is notable that currently a significant volume of intra-Commonwealth trade and investment is going on.”

“Can we think in terms of exploiting a Commonwealth advantage to forming something like Commonwealth Trade and Investment Partnership for leveraging these trade ties?” he asked.

Executive director of PRI Ahsan H Mansur moderated the discussion.

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<http://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/first-page/uk-minister-for-adhering-to-democratic-values-1554659170>

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Bangladesh can be proud of its progress: Mark Field

Staff Correspondent

The visiting British parliamentarian Mark Field yesterday appreciated Bangladesh's gradual progress — turning into one of the fastest growing economies in the world.

Bangladesh has many achievements to celebrate, like reduction of extreme poverty and increase of life expectancy. The country can be proud of the huge progress it has made, said Field, the UK's state minister for Asia and the Pacific at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Speaking at a seminar in Dhaka, he also thanked the Bangladesh government for taking good development policies, and maintaining partnership with the international community and private sector, which helped to make the huge strides.

Policy Research Institute, a non-government research organisation based in Dhaka, arranged the seminar on "Governance and development" at a hotel in the capital.

The British state minister, however, observed that the 11th parliamentary election of Bangladesh, held in December last year, could not meet the standards of free and fair polls.

Democracy means holding elections that are fair, and providing the voters freedom to choose, he said.

"...but I fear the parliamentary election which took place here in December did not meet this standard — as I said at the time," said Mark, while presenting his keynote speech.

He urged the government of Bangladesh to uphold the democratic values along with making economic progress or achieving middle-income status.

Having a political opposition is important to hold the government accountable; besides, presence of a vibrant civil society and strong role of media are also crucial in upholding transparency of public institutions and resisting corruption, said the parliamentarian.

"We want to see a confident Bangladesh, with strong, transparent and accountable

democratic institutions,” said Field.

Speaking as chief guest, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s Political Affairs Advisor HT Imam, however, claimed that the 11th parliamentary polls was held in a free and fair manner.

“Many polling officials were recruited to ensure the fairness of the election. The government did its best to fulfil the demand of the Election Commission,” he said, claiming that some 104 million people voted on election day.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/city/news/bangladesh-can-be-proud-its-progress-mark-field-1726684>

UK minister questions Dec 30 polls

Staff Correspondent | Published: 00:13, Apr 08,2019

Visiting UK state minister Asia and the Pacific Mark Field said on Sunday that the December 30 Bangladesh elections did not meet the standard of ‘holding elections that are fair, and that present voters with a free choice.’

‘As a friend of Bangladesh it gives me no pleasure to say this,’ he said at a seminar at a hotel in Dhaka.

He pressed for a full, credible and transparent resolution of all complaints as he was delivering the keynote paper of the seminar on ‘Governance and Development: the Way Forward for Bangladesh.’

Mark Field noted that voters without a free choice ‘might seek other ways of achieving the changes they want’ and that could pose a much greater threat to stability than allowing them to express their views through democratic channels.

He said that it was also important to have a political opposition as well as a vibrant civil society through which the people - and especially young people - could channel their energies, and indeed

their frustrations, within the law.

He emphasised the need for a strong media to check corruption and uphold the transparency

and credibility of the institutions.

Addressing the seminar, prime minister's political adviser HT Imam said that by and large the last general election was 'peaceful' although some were very critical of it.

Mark Field also focused on the present political situation in the United Kingdom and the complexities of implementing the British people's decision to leave the European Commission.

'This is a time of change for both our countries [United Kingdom and Bangladesh] as the UK is leaving the EU and seeking new opportunities around the world.

He called local students to study in the UK educational institutions.

Prime minister's economic affairs adviser Masiur Rahman said that students' choice for selecting educational institutes depended on job prospect in that country.

He noted the United States was in a position of advantage.

Mark Field also took part in a question and answer session that mainly focused on Brexit, future of commonwealth and Rohingya crisis.

HT Imam urged the visiting state minister to put pressure on Myanmar to take back Rohingyas as Bangladesh was facing many problems, like social, economical and environmental, for sheltering them in Cox's Bazar.

Local think-tank Policy Research Institute organised the seminar with its executive director Ahsan H Mansur in the chair.

<http://www.newagebd.net/article/69471/uk-minister-questions-dec-30-polls>

UK minister: Without choice,

voters may seek 'other ways' to achieve changes

Humayun Kabir Bhuiyan

- Published at 12:54 am April 8th, 2019

British Minister of State Mark Field speaks at an event in Dhaka on Sunday, April 7, 2019 Mehedi Hasan/Dhaka Tribune

Prime minister's Political Affairs Adviser HT Imam was present at the event as chief guest

The parliamentary election held on December 30 last year did not meet the standards that would ensure fairness with a free choice for the voter, British Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Mark Field said, reiterating his call for a transparent settlement of the complaints of irregularities.

Describing people's choice as crucial, he said without it there remains a risk that people will look for 'other ways' for getting the changes they desire.

The UK minister was delivering the keynote address at a seminar on 'Governance and Development - the Way Forward for Bangladesh' organized by the Policy Research Institute (PRI) in Dhaka on Sunday.

Prime minister's Political Affairs Adviser HT Imam was present at the event as chief guest while prime minister's Economic Affairs Adviser Dr Mashiur Rahman attended as guest of honour. PRI Executive Director Dr Ahsan Mansur moderated the seminar.

Both the advisers defended the election on December 30, calling it free, fair and without any interference from the government.

Prior to the seminar, at the same venue, Minister Field told a small group of reporters that the situation surrounding Brexit is still 'fluid' and that it is too early to say to what extent Bangladesh would be affected.

On the Rohingya crisis, he said that the international community would keep on putting pressure on Myanmar to take back their people, but expressed skepticism on the repatriation of the persecuted refugees back to their homes.

"It is often said that democracy is the worst form of government - apart from all the others, and that events continue to prove it right," he said.

"You will be well aware that the British Parliament is currently wrestling with the complexities of implementing the British people's decision to leave the EU. Some have suggested that this lengthy process means democracy has somehow failed.

"As an elected parliamentarian, I can confidently say that the opposite is true; it is democracy in action - with all its imperfections," he added.

The British minister went on to say: "And as a friend of Bangladesh I profoundly hope that, as Bangladesh graduates to middle income status, it will remain true to its democratic values. That means holding elections that are fair, and that presents voters with a free choice.

"It gives me no pleasure to say this, but I fear the parliamentary election which took place here in December did not meet this standard - as I said at the time. I also pressed for a full, credible and transparent resolution of all complaints," he said.

Field said the notion of choice is crucial in any healthy democracy.

"Without it, there is a risk that voters might seek other ways of achieving the changes they want," he added, without any further elaboration.

"Ultimately, that could pose a much greater threat to stability than allowing them to express their views through democratic channels," Field said.

That is why it is so important to have a political opposition in place, one that is able and willing to hold the government to account and offer an alternate view, he said.

The UK minister, a member of the House of Commons belonging to ruling Conservative Party, said: “That means upholding Bangladesh’s fine tradition of allowing people to voice dissent and express themselves freely. It also means allowing the media to do its job of holding the powerful to account.”

“This really matters, because the strength and accountability of our institutions, and the confidence that they inspire in investors, are also crucial to our democracies – and to our economies,” he added, assuring of UK’s help in these aspects.

Field also talked about setting up campuses of different UK educational institutions which he thinks will be a win-win situation for Bangladesh.

Instead of some wealthy students going to the UK to study, London can bring world class education to Bangladesh, he said.

“Every time I come here, I am struck by the energy and talent of the people. I would very much like more of them to have the opportunity to benefit from the UK’s world class educational institutions,” said the minister.

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/2019/04/08/uk-minister-without-choice-voters-may-see-other-ways-to-achieve-changes>

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সংবাদমাধ্যমের গণতন্ত্র

সংবাদমাধ্যমের গণতন্ত্রের অর্থ হল সংবাদমাধ্যমের স্বাধীনতা এবং গণতন্ত্রের স্বাধীনতা। সংবাদমাধ্যমের গণতন্ত্রের অর্থ হল সংবাদমাধ্যমের স্বাধীনতা এবং গণতন্ত্রের স্বাধীনতা। সংবাদমাধ্যমের গণতন্ত্রের অর্থ হল সংবাদমাধ্যমের স্বাধীনতা এবং গণতন্ত্রের স্বাধীনতা।

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