

## *FROM THE EDITOR*

In this issue of the Journal of Bangladesh Studies, the only issue for 2004, we present the articles for June and December together. Combining two issues into one was prompted by our continuing quest for quality. While we received over a dozen and a half articles, our circle of reviewers has expanded and they have begun to demand even better from the submitted articles. Many of our reviewers also painstakingly guide promising articles, many of which are in several stages of the review process and ought to show up in forthcoming issues. The five articles in this issue are a reflection of that (double-blind) partnership that has resulted in these important contributions that we are pleased to present.

I am also pleased to note that we have gained recognition and have begun to establish ourselves in four continents. Article submissions have come from North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. I, in fact, recall one submission also from the African continent which, unfortunately, did not match our focus on Bangladesh.

I might further note that our partnership with institutions such as The Sam & Irene Black School of Business at Penn State Erie, the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies, East West University in Bangladesh, and Bangladesh Development Initiative continues to build steadily. Given these positive developments I feel encouraged that JBS will go on to make important strides and continue to highlight key development issues on the basis of conceptual and empirical analysis.

As I reflect on these developments, I would like to highlight areas in which we have not received scholarly papers and invite researchers to submit articles in the areas of education, health, and other basic services that need attention and improvement. In education, for example, we look forward to articles that focus on curriculum analysis and need for change, teacher development strategies, new pedagogical approaches to “reaching” students, and how the research enterprise in the country could be improved. In my last editorial I had highlighted the country’s dependence on “borrowed knowledge” and how little research is being conducted by academia. In this regard, it is crucial that the incentive structure be analyzed. I might further add that it may be a worthwhile effort for trained academics and researchers in universities and related organizations overseas to partner with faculty in the many universities and research institutions in Bangladesh and enhance their research capabilities. Unless new and indigenous knowledge is generated in the country, the borrowed knowledge that we continue to use may not be very useful for the country’s needs. In fact, I would encourage those academics who

visit the country for substantial periods of time, to develop links with a particular institution and offer intensive methodology courses. In the process they are likely to identify small groups with whom a partnership relationship could be established for long-term involvement to address a pertinent area of research. Multiple payoffs are promised by such partnerships and include capacity building, addressing an area of importance to the country that is currently unexplored or not being addressed using sophisticated research methodologies, building a long-term research agenda that could grow as the circle of researchers begin to widen, and publishing papers and books required for most who working in academia overseas.

In this issue, we present five insightful articles. Elora Shehabuddin addresses the accomplishments and failures of policy pertaining to the millions of underprivileged women who might be able to do better on their own despite the efforts and policies designed to alleviate their condition of poverty. Focusing on the areas of education, family planning and micro-credit, she concedes that there have been improvements, albeit very slowly. Urging policy makers not to become complacent by these accomplishments, Shehabuddin suggests that there is a long way to go and points to areas in which policy makers must focus to better “empower” the women of Bangladesh and improve their position on literacy, poverty, creditworthiness and related issues. Importantly, she makes the crucial point that for society to improve as a whole, women cannot remain marginalized any longer. This point must be understood and imbued by the vast majority of policy makers who are “men.” Being on the other side, they must better try to understand that societal progress will be accelerated when “both” men and women share the burdens and benefits of development.

Habibul Haque Khondker calls attention to the “authoritarian” nature of democracy in Bangladesh and examines how it spawns a variety of social ills such as runaway corruption, manipulation, politicization of institutions, centralization of power, absence of accountability, lack of political vision and will to bring about positive change. He explains these phenomena by taking class factions into account, each looking out for themselves, to better understand “the [lack of] potential for democratization in an economically challenged society.” But he is not without hope for the country and suggests the need for separation of power, an independent judiciary, institution building, rule of law, electoral reforms, and continuing fight against corruption, all hopefully leading to a more vigorous democracy that is the ultimate answer.

Akhter Hossain examines the relationship between money supply growth and inflation in Bangladesh, suggesting how the Bangladesh Bank can play a more positive role and pursue an independent monetary policy or an inflation targeting strategy for price stabilization in the country. Finding a co-integral relationship between the consumer price index, narrow or broad money, and real income, he suggests that inflation targeting, requiring stringent conditions, may not be appropriate at this juncture. Instead, monetary targeting is the preferred option given the existence of a stable money demand function, monetary stability, and the existing market-based exchange rate system.

M. Fakhru Islam and Yoshiro Higano examine an Input-Output model of bilateral water sharing between Bangladesh and India in a cooperative scenario using a simulation exercise. From their model they show that if the present share of 15% percent of the Teesta river water at the Dalia barrage could be increased by another 6%, there would be a marginal decline in gross regional production (GRP) for the Indian side, while for Bangladesh, the gains would be substantial. However, they show that the in the entire region GRP would go up substantially. To account for why India might be willing to cooperate and enable Bangladesh to get more water from the Teesta River during the dry season contributing to increased GRP, they argue for improved business and trade between the two countries, including a temporal migration of labor from India to Bangladesh to ameliorate the marginal decline in GRP in the Indian side. If the assumptions of the model are correct, this article presents an opportunity for India and Bangladesh to establish closer ties, an issue that requires building greater mutual trust and confidence in each other for the entire region to benefit more.

Basanta Kumar Barmon, Takumi Kondo, and Fumio Osanami examine the economic impact of shifting from rice production to cultivation of shrimp and carp in Bilpabla Village in Khulna District. Their data and analyses demonstrate the huge income increases that have accrued among both land owning and renting farmers by

making this switch. Future studies in this area need to address the dynamics of demand and supply and the environmental impacts of such changes. For example, as more farmers shift to shrimp-carp *ghers*, its impact on prices (and hence revenues, costs and incomes) is certain to change. At what point would a potential mass shift from rice production to shrimp-carp production be economically unprofitable needs to be ascertained in subsequent studies. At the same time, the societal impact of such shifts and implications for environmental balance must also be monitored.

We continue to look for manuscripts that are innovative, insightful, and incisive, focusing mainly on development issues of Bangladesh. The articles are expected to provoke debate and challenge policy makers, development planners, international agencies, donor countries, and non-government organizations by reviewing existing practices and seeking innovative solutions to bring about “real” change and real development to uplift the conditions of those who need it most...those in the cruel clutches of poverty.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank once more a wonderful team of editors and manuscript reviewers who continue to provide selflessly of their time. To a large measure the growth of JBS is the result of their diligence and hard work. Thanks are also due to Jeanette Case and Sue Pennington of the Sam & Irene School of Business at Penn State Erie for attending to the typing and formatting of the papers and to Ruth Pfluger for finding the typos and errors in one of the manuscripts.

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