



**Office
of External
Affairs**

THE BRIDGE

The Official Newsletter of the Office Of External Affairs

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Editor's Message

A warm welcome to the fourth issue of The Bridge in which we cover a wide range of the events organized by the OEA during July and August including visits made by Monash and Western Sydney, seminars given by representatives from Alliance Française de Dhaka and the French embassy, NASA astronaut, Dr. Tess Caswell, Former Election Commissioner Brigadier General M Shakhawat Hossain (Retd), Dr. Stephen Luby of Stanford Medical School and more. We also include international faculty, student and alumni features. Finally, there are two shoutouts in this issue. As usual, we do our best to keep you in the loop of all that is happening at the OEA. We hope you will enjoy reading this issue!

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NASA Astronaut Dr. Tess Caswell Visits NSU

On July 1, 2018, North South University and the U.S. Embassy co-hosted an event titled, "Unity on Earth, Unity in Orbit" where Dr. Tess Caswell, a Postdoctoral Research Scientist at Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory came to NSU in celebration of NASA's 60th anniversary, and to promote STEM education. Dr. Caswell is a simulated astronaut for NASA's long-duration space missions, a planetary scientist, and an aerospace engineer. She worked as an Environmental and Thermal Operating Systems or "ETHOS" flight controller for the International Space Station. As an ETHOS, she monitored and controlled the life support and thermal control systems of the ISS, which helps to keep astronauts alive and comfortable while they are in space.

The event began with Dr. Caswell's vivid and pictorial presentation explaining the beginning of NASA and how the astronauts and cosmonauts, at first, were working in a competitive form due to the fragile relationship between the USA and (then) the Soviet Union. However, the tension between the two entities gradually thawed and the USA and Russia have joined hands to work together through their space agencies. Before, the scientists and astronauts were worried about the possible privatization or confrontation over Space. However, this perception was diminished when both the USA and





Russia collaborated and were able to achieve cooperation on Earth. As such, when they gained unity on Earth, they were able to easily build the International Space Station, an incredibly complex creation that conducts scientific investigations and studies the sciences behind the long-term exposure (materials responding to harsh vacuums, life without gravity, and living on Mars). As Dr. Caswell is a part of ETHOS, she explained the most crucial tasks for which ETHOS is responsible. ETHOS provides breathable air for the astronauts and removes carbon dioxide and particles from the space station. ETHOS provides clean and recycled water for the astronauts and keeps the water balanced. As water is very heavy, it is impossible for NASA to send water through a space shuttle every time the space station runs out of it. Thus, all the water is recycled and ETHOS monitors this process. As Dr. Caswell puts it, “Yesterday’s coffee is also tomorrow’s coffee”. She explained that ETHOS carries a huge burden to monitor the proper functioning of astronauts living. If the astronauts had to worry about these, then they would not be able to conduct research or experiments for the advancement of space knowledge.

After her presentation, Dr. Caswell answered many questions raised by the audience members. She answered how students from other fields like CSE, EEE can also study astrophysics to build a career and work for NASA. She also explained the commercialization of space as NASA’s budget is limited. Commercialization actually allows NASA to focus on more advanced projects. All the revolutionary discoveries can be made if NASA receives the required funding. She concluded by stressing the point that when everything is synched and united on the ground, everything is also synched and united in space; hence, the title “Unity on Earth, Unity in Orbit”. At the end the Pro Vice-Chancellor (D), Prof. Dr. G.U. Ahsan and the Dean of School of Engineering and Physical Sciences, Prof. Dr. Arshad M Chowdhury thanked Dr. Caswell for coming to NSU and inspiring so many students to dream higher, higher than the skies to space. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (D) especially thanked the U.S. Embassy Dhaka and the Office of External Affairs for their wonderful partnership in organizing this event. Lastly, Dr. Caswell was given a bouquet of flowers and a crest as tokens of appreciation for her time from NSU.

Seminar on "Latest Developments in Hydrologic Modelling in Australia"

On Tuesday, 14 August 2018, Associate Professor Dr. Ataur Rahman from Western Sydney University (WSU), Australia came to North South University (NSU) to share the latest developments in Hydrologic Modelling in Australia. This event was organized by the Office of External Affairs and was the direct result of the NSU delegation team's Australia visit. He started his talk by introducing himself and WSU to the faculty members of NSU. After that, Dr. Rahman explained how flooding was a major problem in Australia. To give a clearer picture, he informed that the economic cost of flooding in Australia accounts for 29% of all disasters, which is the highest cost for a natural disaster. The average annual flood damage in Australia is about \$400 million and economic cost of 2010-11 Queensland flood was over \$30 billion. Dr. Rahman pointed out that climate change is the reason why the frequency and severity of floods has increased. Then he moved on to the purpose of possessing a flood estimation tool. He explained one needs to understand floods to reduce their frequency and prepare for their prevention. An accurate flood estimation tool is necessary as it can identify areas of higher flood risk and minimize development in those areas. Furthermore, adequate flood control infrastructure can be created that will let the flood waters pass quickly. Afterwards, Dr. Rahman shared WSU's efforts on developing the Regional Flood Frequency Estimation (RFFE) Model which has been included in Australian Rainfall and Runoff – the National Guide. The RFFE Model 2016 provides a probabilistic estimate of flood quantiles that is expected in a region. Dr. Rahman concluded that the RFFE Model was a nationally consistent approach and Bangladesh could develop such a model for national flood risk assessment. For this, NSU and WSU can start a joint research project where NSU can take the lead to form a National Project Team and WSU can provide technical support. The OEA and Dr. Rahman gave a shout out to the Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Dr. Javed Bari, the Chair of Environmental Science & Management, Dr. Md. Jakariya and a former faculty member of NSU and current faculty member of WSU, Dr. M Ashiqur Rahman for their support.



Seminar on "Improving Rural Lives in Bangladesh: Present and Future"



On Sunday, 12 August 2018, Monash University in partnership with Oxfam, Austrade, and North South University organized a seminar on "Improving rural lives in Bangladesh: Present and Future". This event is the first step toward a formal collaboration between NSU and Monash University. The seminar highlighted the unlimited possibilities to improve our communities when universities, governments, NGOs, and industries work together. The UGC Chairman Prof. Abdul Mannan, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Mr. M. A. Hashem, the Vice-Chancellor of NSU, Professor Atiqul Islam and Austrade STIC Lionie Muldoon were present in the program.

The Keynote speaker Honourable Minister of State for Information and Communication Technology Division, Mr. Zunaid Ahmed Palak praised and shared the Monash team's vision for e-society and economy in rural Bangladesh. Participatory Research and Ownership with Technology, Information, and Change (PROTIC) - The ongoing Monash Oxfam translational research project lead by Dr. Larry Stillman has demonstrated that we can use the skills knowledge and learnings of rural women as 'active citizens' to use and create a 'value-added' information to increase food and other production and support rural innovation. Further understanding the progress in education in Bangladesh context and its challenges shared by Monash University Associate Professor Asadul Islam and his ex-student and current faculty member at NSU, Dr. Kanti Ananta Nuzhat encourages policy makers and participants for action in making education better especially for females.

In the end, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Mr. M. A. Hashem said, "The government of Bangladesh is working strongly to improve the rural lives. NSU appreciates such initiatives and will be working in the future with the government, NGOs and international universities in research work for such causes". The session was chaired by the Vice-Chancellor of NSU, Professor Atiqul Islam. NSU, to show its appreciation, presented the guests with crests and bouquets for their valuable speech and time.



International Faculty Member Feature



Dr. Katherine Li has had an interesting life so far. She moved to Hawai'i from the E. Coast of the U.S. on her 19th birthday. That is when she began to understand that that world was a lot bigger than she had ever imagined. She earned her BA in Asian Studies from the University of Hawaii at Mānoa. After that, she traveled the world. According to her, she can stumble her way through 6 languages: Bengali, Chinese, French, German, Japanese and Spanish. Oh, and English, too. She even tried her hand at Portuguese before going to Brazil to attend the Carnival in Rio. She seems unable to be cured of travel fever. After earning her MA in International Educational Development at Columbia, she returned to her first alma mater to get a PhD in Educational Foundations. Dr. Li worked in the corporate world before moving over to Academia and feels that she has been able to transfer all of her prior skills. She recently finished a Leadership Coaching program at Georgetown for which she had to commute monthly from Dhaka. One may wonder where she gets this insatiable need to keep learning. Today, we see her actively promoting the Office of External Affairs at NSU everywhere she goes. Even though she left the classroom, she never stops teaching those around her. If there is one thing that she hopes to do, it is to help others discover the talent that they brought into the world and then encourage them to fully develop it.

Interviewer: You seem to have traveled all over the world. What made your traveling halt at Bangladesh and why did you choose NSU?

Dr. Katherine Li : Bangladesh has a perfect climate, good food, and warm-hearted people. As a developing country, it faces challenges in every sector. Having done my graduate work in International Education, there isn't a more suitable place for me to experience everything I learned in my textbooks about the role that education plays in a transitioning economy. Moreover, all of the Development agencies are in Bangladesh, so I have an unparalleled opportunity to learn about how those linkages support Bangladesh in its effort to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. I marvel at the rate of change right before my eyes. To answer your question, everything that interests me is right here in Bangladesh and my job allows me to keep traveling. Actually, I feel that NSU and I chose each other.

I: It's been a year since you joined the Office of External Affairs (OEA). Congratulations on your one-year anniversary! What has it been like working at the OEA this past year and what are your goals for the next year?

KL: I feel like this job was custom-made for me. Having been on the faculty for first three years of my tenure at NSU, I gained valuable experience through direct contact with the students and other faculty members. I know exactly what the situation is in the classroom. This gave me a broad perspective as I moved into the role of an administrator tasked with matching-making academic collaboration opportunities with other institutions both in and outside of Bangladesh. With an understanding of what the Vice Chancellor was trying to achieve (top 100 in Asia according to the QS ranking within three years), I was able to set benchmarks for the OEA. Next I met with many of the key internal stakeholders to gain their perspective. Then I sat with my staff and together we charted the course. During the first year we achieved a lot, but more importantly we matured as a team and each person

grew personally and professionally. As a teacher, there isn't anything more rewarding. Moving into the second year, I want to continue to water all the seeds planted in the first year so that we can continue to harvest rich and rewarding collaborations around the world.

I: I presume no one at NSU is quite as multilingual as you are. What inspired you to learn all these languages? Have you achieved proficiency in Bangla?

KL: I'm a Gemini/Tiger. That means that I'm a restless communicator. I have to know what people are saying around me, especially when I am the subject of the conversation. I actually didn't know that I had a flare for languages until I did my junior year abroad. At that time I lived with a French family, which meant that when I was hungry, I had to know how to let them know. When immersed in a culture, the language comes naturally. It made me realize how artificial it is to learn a language outside the context if you cannot actually apply what you are learning immediately. As for Bangla, I wonder if age has anything to do with it. When I was younger, I could pick up a language in no time. Now, I think I understand about 80% of all conversations around me, but it is really only when I'm with people outside of NSU that I am challenged to speak Bangla. In that regard, my spoken Bangla is very elementary. I did, however, teach myself to read and write Bangla. Being more fluent in Bangla is definitely a goal that I have for myself, especially because I would like to stay here for many more years.

I: As your bio states you never stop teaching people around you, however, what is the thing that you miss most about academia and teaching?

KL: I miss watching someone blossom right in front of my eyes. My teaching methods are radically student-centered, so when someone comes in and has never been pushed to be a leader, I adore nurturing their self-confidence. Actually, that is exactly what I get to experience with my staff in the OEA, because I keep pushing them out in the front. Each one of them has transformed a lot in a year. Each one of them has incredible talent and drive. It's my job to keep fueling that desire so that they can fully manifest their talents.

I: What is it like to be an international faculty member at NSU? Can you share some anecdotes?

KL: Honestly speaking, in the beginning it was hard. Even though I have extensive international experience, I found myself getting frustrated by the differences in how people manage time. Having had all of my foundational education in the West, I am definitely a task-oriented performer and measure my success against the ability to achieve goals on a timeline. Also, the level of formality and hierarchy was something that took me awhile to adjust to. I am used to a flatter management structure. On the other hand, people have gone out of their way to ensure that I feel comfortable and safe. Bangladeshis have taught me how to be more flexible, more patient, more resilient, a little less direct, and yes, a lot more relaxed.

I: NSU, as a university, is synonymous with excellence. What is your advice for everyone to uplift or heighten NSU's reputation even more?

KL: Wherever you go, remember that you are an NSU ambassador. **Whatever** you do reflects on the reputation of NSU. If you want NSU to be excellent, you be excellent. It's up to each and every one of us to put and keep NSU at the top.

Dr. Li is currently the Director of OEA and has been working day and night to promote NSU globally. We thank Dr. Li for her hard work and for sharing a bit of her life with us.

Seminar on "Study in the USA: NSU Alumni Experience Sharing"

On Tuesday, July 24, 2018, the Office of External Affairs organized a seminar called "Study in the USA: NSU Alumni Experience Sharing" where an NSU alumnus, Mr. Md Rezwan Hussain Ratul came to NSU to share his experience of his further education in abroad. After graduating from NSU in 2015, Mr. Ratul worked for Robi Axiata Ltd. and EducationUSA Bangladesh before heading to the USA to attain his Master's in Business Administration from National University, Los Angeles, California in 2017. Using his experience as an example, Mr. Ratul shared information on the application process, admission, interview and visa processing, living and studying in the USA. He suggested the future applicants to apply for three to five universities so that they could fall back on the other options if their desired choice of university did not accept them. He also advised selecting universities that had funding available as higher education is quite expensive for international students. Mr. Ratul shared that graduate students can get a job but it is limited to their own campus as F-1 visa holder status does not allow employment anywhere besides one's own educational institute. He explained that some universities in the US may not require GRE or GMAT; however, it is prudent to take the necessary standardized tests for English proficiency and graduate admission. Then, he explained the standardized tests to the audience members and about the required score necessary to ensure one's admission to good schools. For the application process, Mr. Ratul urged the listeners to pay close attention to the 'Statement of Purpose' as that is the key to receive offer letters from universities. To attain a visa, he said to be persuasive and to state one's interests and reasons precisely. He warned not to showcase a bundle of documents and only to present the ones asked to provide. Mr. Ratul assured that the semester in the USA is similar to NSU and students will not have problems coping up with their style of teaching. The audience members were glued to Mr. Ratul's speech and asked many questions regarding degree funding and the living situation in the US. The seminar ended with a vote of thanks from the Director of the Office of External Affairs, Dr. Katherine Li and with a commemorative picture. Mr. Ratul was presented with a bouquet of flowers and NSU souvenirs to show NSU's appreciation for his time and initiative.



Alumni Feature



Mr. MD Jahidul Islam is a development practitioner and disability rights activist. He has been working in the disability rights movement since 2007. He worked for Action Aid International and CBM International. Mr. Islam is a part of the Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction project, where his role is monitoring and including people with disabilities in the project. He was affected by Polio at the age of two and has been using a wheelchair since then. However, his paralyzed state did not impede his education. In spite of a lot of hardships, he continued to pursue his education. With a full scholarship, he obtained an MBA degree from North South University in 2014. Before that, he received his BBA from Southeast University. He also obtained a Bachelor's degree on Disability in the Community, Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) and International Development from Queen's University, Canada, through distance learning program. In 2016, Mr. Islam was selected for the "Young Connectors of the Future", a South Asian youth leadership development fellowship program sponsored by the Swedish Institute which he successfully completed it in Sweden. From 2010 to 2014, Mr. Islam worked as a freelance digital marketer and web researcher. In 2013, he was awarded BASIS (Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services) Outsourcing Award for his outstanding performance as an online freelancer. He was the only person with a disability in Bangladesh who received this Award from the ICT Division. Later on, he started to provide training on ICT-based employment for youth with disabilities. Recently, Mr. Islam received one of the most prestigious scholarships, "Australia Awards Scholarship" from the Australian government. He

is expected to join the Master's program of Climate Change at the Australian National University, which is one of the highest ranking universities in the world and number one in Australia.

Interviewer: First of all, I would like to express my appreciation to you for being a role model for people with disabilities. Can you share how it was for you to pursue education at the beginning? Did you face any discrimination? Who were your driving forces?

MD Jahidul Islam: Thank you so much for your appreciation. Education for people with disabilities has been very challenging in our country and there are several reasons behind it. But, I would like to highlight the most two important reasons. The first reason is accessibility. Most of the academic institutions are not disabled-friendly. Especially during my time in the early nine-ties, it was almost zero. The other reason is the financial condition of the disabled's family. I faced both of these barriers for pursuing my education. Still, I would say that I was one of the fortunate people with a disability and that my parents were very supportive and proactive toward my education. It was really challenging for them. Taking me to school every day was very difficult. In the beginning, my mother used to take me to school. But later on, she became sick and was unable to carry me, as I had grown physically. But, that did not stop them from sending me to school every day. A person was hired to take me to school and this is how I studied till high school. When my parents tried to admit me to the nearest college, the authority refused my admission as I would have to come every day by a rickshaw and they would have to open it again and again. Only because of this reason they refused me. However, later on, I got admitted at Adamjee Cantonment College as they were considerate enough to understand my situation. Though attending classes on the 3rd floor was very challenging, I am proud to say I never missed my classes. I would like to stress that my parents were the driving forces behind my education. They never thought

that sending me to school was just a waste of money or time. They always believed that only education could change my life in the future and they were right.

I: Is there room in the curriculum for Disability Studies at NSU? If so, where?

Jl: Disability studies basically is a part of social science studies, but I think it can be part of public health studies. It could be introduced by various club activities that create awareness and thereby make the NSU campus more disability friendly. For that, a particular domain can be created like a center for access and inclusion.

I: What is it like to be a development practitioner and disability rights activist? What is the biggest challenge for people with disabilities in Bangladesh?

Jl: From my point of view, development should be inclusive for all. It must be accessible to all people irrespective of their disability, gender, caste, age, etc. For example, there is a lot of infrastructural development going on in Bangladesh. But unfortunately, most of these are not accessible for people with disabilities. It is happening due to the lack of awareness and sometimes, there is no one to bring up these issues. In Bangladesh, approximately 10% of our total population have disabilities according to the report of WHO in 2011. So, the number of the disabled population is significantly large. A country cannot develop by keeping behind 10% of its population. We, the disability rights activists, are working to spread awareness into both public and private sectors. We are also working to ensure how a country's development benefit can cover its marginalized population. There are a lot of challenges for people with disabilities in Bangladesh. But in all together poverty is the biggest challenge for people with disabilities. Disability and poverty fuel each other in a brutal cycle of hardship and deprivation that is hard to escape. People living in poverty often go hungry and get limited access to safe water for drinking, sanitation or other needs. They live in dangerous environments that are most affected by natural disasters. They are also the people more likely to undertake hazardous work. These conditions of poverty significantly increase someone's chances of becoming disabled by malnutrition, disease or injury. Disabled people are more likely to stay trapped in poverty as they face multiple barriers to securing a livelihood and fully participating in society. Discrimination limits education, employment. So, I must say poverty is the biggest challenge for people with disabilities.

I: What was your feeling when you received the prestigious "Australian Awards Scholarship"?

Jl: It is hard to describe in words, but I must say that I felt extremely honored and appreciative for receiving the prestigious "Australia Awards Scholarship". This boosted my confidence and inspiration and made me realize my dreams in developing an innovative, creative society where individuals get a chance to become global players. "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step" has always been my life philosophy in pursuing my dreams and to improve myself in order to contribute to society. I believe this scholarship will open up ample opportunities for me to become a leader in the area of social development, especially for disability-inclusive development.

I: You have such wonderful accomplishments. After your Master's degree, what are the other things you wish to accomplish? Also, do you wish to do something for NSU?

Jl: Honestly, I am not sure what to accomplish after my Master's degree. Like I was not thinking to study climate change two years back. It suddenly came to my mind that there is a possibility in the future to work on this issue. But of course, I will work for disability-inclusive disaster risk management and climate change issues in Bangladesh after completing my Master's. If I can do something for NSU that will be one of the most valuable accomplishments for me and I would like to focus on that after returning to Bangladesh.

Seminar on "Opportunities to Study in France, French & Scholarships"

On 9 July 2018, the Office of External Affairs of North South University arranged an informational session titled, "Opportunities to Study in France, French & Scholarships" where members of the French Embassy and Alliance Française de Dhaka (AFD) joined to promote higher education in France. The Deputy Head-of-Mission, Embassy of France, Mr. Jean Pierre Poncet and Director, AFD, Mr. Bruno Plasse, and Professor of FLE, AFD, Mr. Kazi Ashraf Uddin were the guests. The event was divided into two sessions; the first session was dedicated to inform students on the scopes and opportunities to study in France and the other was dedicated to the faculty members and administrators to discuss possible collaborations in France. During the first session, Mr. Uddin, Campus France representative, explained that Campus France is the French national agency for the promotion of higher education, international student services, and international mobility. He informed the audience that Campus France helps students to find different schools and universities in France related to their field of study, student grants and how to apply in France, with or without an exchange program. Later on, Mr. Uddin emphasized the reasons to study in France. France has a vibrant international ambiance where there is more than 12% international students. France possesses a pleasant temperate climate, economic stability, excellent art and cultural exposure, the 9th most widely spoken language, French and the world famous French cuisine. Afterwards, Mr. Uddin explained the structure of the French education system and higher education choices, which include: Universities, Grandes Ecoles, and Specialized schools and institutes. Based on their field of studies and need, the students were advised to choose the institution in which they wished to enroll. The session ended with a Q/A session where souvenirs were presented to the participants. At the end of the session, the Vice-Chancellor of NSU, Prof. Atiqul Islam thanked the speaker and guests from the Embassy of France and AFD for broadening the horizon of options to the students. Seeing the participation and outcome of the program, the Embassy of France and AFD showed their interest to come to NSU twice a year for such informational sessions to promote education in France. In the second session, faculty members and administrative personnel joined for a meeting with the guests where they explored options for the regular outbound of NSU students or alumni to go to France for higher education. NSU showed great interest to have teachers from AFD come and teach French to NSU students. The representatives from the Embassy of France and AFD assured that they would see how an agreement might be established so that French language teachers could be sent to NSU and that they would also try to connect NSU with some of the best schools in France.



International Student Feature

Huang Jingru is an undergraduate student pursuing her bachelor's degree in Business Administration. She is commonly known as Fibi and likes to make new friends.

Interviewer: Tell us something about yourself.

Huang Jingru: My name is Huang Jingru. I am 21 years old, from a quiet and leisurely town in Fujian Province, China. I am in the BBA department, this is my fifth semester at North South University. I was born to a family full of warmth in a harmonious atmosphere. I have no special hobbies, but I like things a lot, such as baking, traveling, watching movies, etc. Sometimes I am lazy and I don't want to do anything. I feel that I am cheerful and like to make friends. For me, language is an obstacle, whether in learning or communicating, but I firmly believe in a Chinese saying, "Nothing is difficult if you put your heart into it."

I: What made you choose NSU as your alma mater?

HJ: Why did I choose NSU? It can be said that it was a coincidence. In the winter of 2016, I was still a high school student. I came to Bangladesh with my cousin. My cousin worked in Bangladesh, and I was traveling. That was my first time in Bangladesh, and since then I have had a close relationship with Bangladesh. After I graduated from high school, my sister suggested that I come to Bangladesh to go to college. As I like to see and experience different lifestyles all over the short world, I wanted to come to Bangladesh. Moreover, the economic and cultural exchanges between Bangladesh and China have grown stronger in recent years. NSU is also my ideal campus. Therefore, this actualized the idea of studying in Bangladesh and choosing NSU.

I: How is your experience with NSU so far?

HJ: When I first went to North South University, all the environment was strange and novel to me. For the first impression here, it is still somewhat unexpected. The legendary "dirty mess" is actually not that serious, nor is it everywhere. Now, in my fifth semester at North South University, I have a general understanding of the school's environment, regulations, and infrastructure. There are many differences between North South University and Chinese universities. For example, all students of Chinese universities must live on campus, while students at North South University have to go home. The Chinese Universities take 45 minutes for one class whereas, NSU takes 90 minutes, etc. The skills and practices taught to the students at NSU are particularly strong. Through the club activities, I saw students collecting materials and making what they needed. Whether teachers or schoolmates, everyone at NSU is very friendly. They like Chinese culture very much and try to



communicate with me in Chinese. The curriculum system of NSU is very different from that of Chinese universities. NSU requires students to take each course seriously and stipulates that students must achieve more than just grades. They must develop self-discipline, which had a profound impact on me.

I: Bangladesh is becoming more and more interested in China and its language and cultural practices. As an international student, do you see that in NSU as well? Do you see NSU as a culturally diverse institute where you are free to conduct yourself according to your cultural practices?

HJ: Yes, there are many things about Chinese culture that can be seen at NSU such as, Confucius Institute at NSU. Entering the headquarters of the Confucius Institute at North University of China, the decorations of various Chinese elements immediately made me feel the atmosphere of home. The enthusiastic volunteers are very friendly. On the days of traditional Chinese festivals, the teachers and students from the Confucius Institute at North South University host the Lantern Festival that features a row of lanterns, crosswords and Chinese snacks, and exposure to Chinese culture. Students from other departments come to visit and learn about the traditional Chinese culture. “Ni hao” is the most used Chinese words I have heard from non-Chinese speakers. I think North South University is a diversified institution. There are international students from various countries. The school has a diverse student culture. Many teachers come from abroad or return from overseas, and have a diverse educational culture. Despite the diversified nature, one can form new habits based from the culture you are exposed to. You know, when in Rome, do as the Romans do. So, I followed that philosophy while maintaining my own cultural differences.

I: Can you share some early stories when you first came to Bangladesh?

HJ: In the beginning, my (English) speaking skills were very bad. I can briefly explain how I struggled before due to my speaking skills. I faced a hard time expressing my thoughts clearly. I had to communicate with people through a dictionary and show them what I wanted to say. When my friends told me something and I could not understand it, they used to say, “Open your phone, open your dictionary”. When I struggled to describe interesting things, my friend’s face showed that he/she could not understand what I was trying to convey. So, it was very hard at first. Now, I think I am getting better but, I still have a long way to go.

I: Anything you wish to tell the future applicants of NSU?

HJ: When you come to NSU, you form a good attitude that helps you to change yourself. Just starting school, you may not feel that the enthusiasm of the students of NSU. However, slowly, the strong learning atmosphere will make you involuntarily part of it. After class, you should learn to communicate with the teachers, and the time for answering questions should be used well. The lectures of famous teachers can also be selectively presented. These are very beneficial to your university life. In college, you must set a plan for yourself, set a goal, be ideal, and move toward the goal. In addition, there are many useful books in the library. Beyond learning the knowledge in the class, everyone has time to borrow some extracurricular books, which is conducive to broadening their horizons. In addition to learning, you can participate in some club activities, exercise your organizational skills and interpersonal skills, and enrich our university life. In addition to this, you can participate in some volunteer activities, social practice activities. In fact, there are many things that universities can do. If you distinguish between primary and secondary and reasonable use, you will live a very fulfilling and meaningful day. Please remember the main theme of the university is to study. Only after mastering the knowledge you can be qualified for success. At the same time, we must also enhance our hands-on ability, and attach great importance to the practical operation of professional courses. The knowledge of books can only be used for its significance. At the same time, we must also realize that the university is half a society. In order to prepare for entering the society, we must increase our interpersonal skills and expand our network. Finally, I hope that all of you will be able to grasp the precious time of the university, enrich yourselves, exercise yourselves, and lay a solid foundation for the future path of success.

Brick Manufacturing and Public Health in Bangladesh



On 14 August 2018, Dr. Stephen Luby from Stanford University came to NSU to give a talk on the topic “Brick Manufacturing and Public Health in Bangladesh”. This event was organized by the Office of External Affairs and was a direct result of the NSU delegation trip’s visit to Stanford University in April. According to Dr. Luby, brick manufacturing in South Asia causes substantial adverse environmental and health outcomes. He informed the audience participants that there are many determinants of health-related problems that lay outside the health sector and that preventing them requires efforts outside the health sector and often outside the Ministry of Health’s control. Dr. Luby explained that out of the top four leading risk factors—dietary risks, tobacco smoking, high blood pressure, and air pollution—three operate outside the health sector. Pneumonia is the leading cause of child death in Bangladesh and globally. Influenza is another leading disease rampant in Bangladesh. Then he went on to discuss the stages of research in public health problem solving. They include: identifying a problem, explicating the causal paths that generate the problem, developing an intervention to interrupt generation of the problem, piloting the intervention, rigorously testing an intervention, and then scaling up the intervention. Afterwards, Dr. Luby shifted to brick manufacturing in Bangladesh. According to the sampling of air at the Atomic Energy Centre, brick kilns account for 91% of black carbon. In Bangladesh, current brick production is ≈ 25 billion/year which is expected to increase two to

three times in the next twenty years. This projection is applicable to all of South Asia. There are over four thousand fixed brick kilns in Bangladesh which are responsible for the generation of black carbon and particulate matter. Dr. Luby furthered his argument by showing the history of brick manufacturing regulations in Bangladesh. In 2001, the government issued a policy stating kilns were not allowed within three kilometers of urban areas, but that this was not enforced. In 2007, a new policy was created whereby alternative fuels were prioritized in order to reduce the use of coal and this too was unenforced. The latest policy made in 2010 set to ban fixed chimney kilns by 2012 was postponed. Therefore, the implementation of such regulations seems to be an impossible task. Dr. Luby suggested a few ways to reduce air pollution from brick manufacturing such as the Particulate after-burner (effectively eliminates particulate matters from various non-point source polluters), the Natural Draft Zig-Zag Kiln (reduces coal consumption by 25% per brick and black carbon emission by 85%), and others. Dr. Luby also mentioned the three financial streams that could transform the brick sector. They are: private investors lending money for kiln upgrades which could be repaid with interest by the kiln owner, global climate mitigation funders providing funding for the decrease in black carbon emission, and initial catalytic philanthropic funding to demonstrate proof of principle. At the end of the day, the ultimate objective of this is to transform the ways bricks are and can be manufactured in Bangladesh (and eventually across South Asia) so that they cause less harm to the environment and health. After the talk, Dr. Luby was presented with a crest and a bouquet of flowers as tokens of appreciation and was invited to come to NSU again in the near future.

Seminar on "Democracy & Elections: Importance of Voting among the Youth"

On 18 July 2018, the Office of External Affairs at North South University organized a program titled, "Democracy and Elections: Importance of Voting among the Youth" where Brigadier General Dr. M Shakhawat Hossain (Retd), Former Election Commissioner discussed what a fair, free, and credible election means. This event was supported by the U. S. Embassy Dhaka and facilitated by Change Makers. The other guests present in the program were Advocate Tanbir Siddiqui, President and CEO, Change Makers and Professor Salahuddin M. Aminuzzaman, Adviser, South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG), NSU. In the event, Dr. Hossain introduced the Election Commission of Bangladesh (BEC) and its legal framework to the audience members. He brought up the issue that the youth in Bangladesh are nonchalant about politics and voting. He urged the audience members, who are or will be future voters, to go out and give their ballot. Voting is every human being's moral right and no one can deprive him/her of it. Dr. Hossain informed that Bangladesh has a large pool of voters and the majority of them are the youth. One vote is significant enough to change an election result. If one vote can do that, then he asked to imagine what that large number of voters can do. He also stressed that if one does not vote, then someone else may steal their ballot. Therefore, it is prudent that one votes, no matter what. If the youth wants to bring change to the ways of governance, first they have to exercise their first right and vote for their desired candidates. Later, Dr. Hossain explained that encouraging young voters is one of the biggest challenges faced by BEC. This is why organizing such events to bring awareness among young voters is important. He also suggested to establish a day as voter day and observe it in every year to continue motivating young voters. He concluded the talk stating that "To conduct a good election, stakeholders mainly, Government of the day, political parties, candidates, civil society, media, judiciary, and voters must be fair and exercise their rights given by the Constitution". If everyone is fair and exercises their rights, change can be made and our country can become free of corruption. After the speech, a Q/A session was followed where many participants asked questions regarding fair elections, constitution, candidacy, fake ballots, and more. The program ended with a vote of thanks from the Dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Professor Abdur Rob Khan where he expressed his gratitude to the speaker for this enlightening session. Dr. Hossain was given a crest as a token of appreciation from North South University for his valuable time and presence.



Tips on How to Publish a High Impact Journal Article

On Tuesday, 14 August 2018, Associate Professor Dr. Ataur Rahman from Western Sydney University (WSU), Australia came to North South University (NSU) and shared a few tips for publishing a good quality journal article. Having published more than 350 papers/book chapters/books/reports, Dr. Rahman is an expert researcher who has received the Vice Chancellor's Excellence Award in Higher Degree Research Training and Supervision in 2017 and 2015. His first tip for amateur researchers was to meditate on what they want to publish. He requested the researchers to ponder over a few crucial questions such as, "Is it worth publishing?", "What are the points the paper will convey?", "Is there adequate data available", etc. His second tip was to discuss the ideas with the researcher's supervisor/co-authors. He requested researchers to be prepared to receive criticism. Criticism coming from the supervisor/co-authors will prepare the researcher for any negative review. Dr. Rahman's third tip was to select the platform where one wishes to publish the journal article. He asked the researchers to read a few papers published on that platform and get an idea of its standard. The next tip was to prepare a solid outline of the paper with the major and minor headings, figures, and tables. Some journals have limits on figure and table numbers. Therefore, his suggestion was to have 8 figures and 7 tables. Dr. Rahman's fifth tip was to pay attention to the writing. Publication in one of the top journals is harder than writing an entire PhD thesis. Therefore, he advised researchers to contemplate before writing and not write in haste. He asked the researchers to remember the three C's while writing: completeness, connectivity, and conciseness. Dr. Rahman's next tip was to plan the sequence of writing. His suggestion was to first write study area, experiments, data, and methodology and then, slowly move towards the introduction, references, and abstract which are the hardest to write. His seventh tip was to complete the first draft without worrying about grammar or criticism by supervisor/co-authors. However, he urged to read the draft multiple times and never give a very rough draft to your supervisor with numerous inconsistencies and spelling mistakes. Dr. Rahman's eighth tip was to write results and discussion section (which is the heart of one's paper) and to ensure that it is about 50% of the researcher's entire paper. His next tip was to write the introduction addressing the limitations of previous studies. This will help the researcher to prove his/her hypotheses. His penultimate tip was to write the conclusion and generalize the findings of his/her paper. His last tip was to write a brief yet, complete and well-connected abstract. He informed that the abstract may need more than five drafts before it becomes acceptable by the supervisor/co-authors as it is the most difficult part of the article. Before concluding his talk, Dr. Rahman reminded the future researchers to not presume that one's supervisor will fix everything. The supervisor is supposed to give criticism to make the researcher's paper fool-proof. It is the researcher's responsibility to write, revise, and remove silly errors. In the end, Dr. Rahman thanked NSU and the OEA for organizing this talk. For further support and information, he asked the participants to email him at a.rahman@westernsydney.edu.au.



NSU Faculty Member, Dr. Nabil Shovon Ashraf Receives Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award



Associate Professor, Dr. Nabil Shovon Ashraf received the prestigious Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award 2017 awarded by Marquis Who's Who LLC, USA. The Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award is an honor reserved for biographies who have demonstrated leadership, excellence, and longevity within their respective industries and professions. One of the highest distinctions available through Marquis Who's Who, the award entitles biographies to a listing on the Lifetime Achievers website alongside fellow honorees, as well as a professional announcement detailing induction. As in all Marquis Who's Who biographical volumes, individuals profiled are selected on the basis of the current reference value. Factors such as position, noteworthy accomplishments, visibility, and prominence in a field are all taken into account during the selection process. Dr. Ashraf is the only Bangladeshi recipient of this esteemed award. Not only that, he is also a two-time recipient (in 2014 and 2015) of Marquis Who's Who in America award. The OEA congratulates him on his excellent achievement!

NSU Faculty Member, Dr. Mubashar Hasan Receives Early Career Research Award

Dr. Mubashar Hasan, Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science and Sociology of North South University (currently pursuing a Postdoctorate at the University of Oslo), has won the prestigious Early Career Research Award at the 11th Global Studies Conference in Granada, Spain. The conference, held on Monday and Tuesday, was attended by scholar delegates from over 30 countries, and was jointly organized by the US based Common Ground Research Network (CGRN), and University of Granada in Spain. "We have assessed several accomplishments of Dr Mubashar Hasan before giving him the honour. This award acknowledges Dr. Hasan's excellent research and publication record with some of the world's leading academic publishing houses, as well as his deep commitment to advanced research and knowledge. He is a promising early career researcher who deserves recognition in this prestigious global forum, which is participated by some of the world's leading thinkers," said Dr. Phillip Kalantzis-Cope, chief social scientist at CGRN at the closing ceremony of the conference. As part of the recognition, Dr. Hasan was invited to chair four conference sessions at the University of Granada on Monday. Academics from South Africa, France, United States, Russia, Panama, Spain, and India delivered presentations at the sessions. Some of the presenters work at prestigious universities such as Brown University, University of Delhi, and Rhode Island College. The OEA congratulates him on his brilliant achievement!

