

Bangladesh High Commission
Canberra

Press Release

Bangladesh-Australia relationship to expand: Dr. Iftekhar Chowdhury

Canberra, 13 June 2007 Wednesday

“Bangladesh-Australia have much in common and our bilateral relations are poised to expand greatly,” said Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Foreign Adviser following his discussion with his Australian counterpart, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer today.

“We held discussions in a cordial atmosphere and agreed to take our cooperation further along a variety of areas”, Dr. Chowdhury added during his remarks to the media. The meeting took place Wednesday morning in the Foreign Minister's Office in Canberra.

The Foreign Adviser explained the reform measures that the Caretaker Government was adopting, which the Australian Minister appreciated, and which he hoped would facilitate the holding of the elections within the stipulated time frame.

The Foreign Adviser reaffirmed the commitment of the interim government to strictly apply “zero tolerance” for human rights violations, and informed the Australian Minister that a National Human Rights Commission was being set up. The Australian Foreign Minister, while appreciating these measures, underscored the importance of continued focus on human rights issues.

Australian aid to Bangladesh would be expanded, Foreign Minister Downer assured the Foreign Adviser, and the modalities and content would need to be worked out. “Australia and Bangladesh have worked together intermittently but there was need to have greater cooperation in many common areas on a continued and structured basis”, he observed.

The Bangladesh High Commissioner to Australia Mr. M. Humayun Kabir and DG, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mr. Shahidul Islam were present at the meeting.

On the Australian side Ms. Kathy Klugman, Assistant Secretary for South and West Asia, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, was on hand.

The Foreign Adviser received a briefing from AusAID, the Australian Aid Agency in the afternoon. In course of the talks he stressed upon the need for increase in scholarships to Bangladeshis and possibly supply of English teachers for Bangladeshi schools from Australia under its proposed 'English in Action' programme. Possibilities of supply of lentils and, chic-peas to meet Bangladesh's current requirement was also discussed.

In the evening Dr. Iftekhar Chowdhury is scheduled to give a lecture at the Australian National University.

Foreign Adviser with Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer

