

Bangladesh, Australia identify new avenues of bilateral ties

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Online Desk : Bangladesh and Australia have identified new avenues for cooperation in areas such as renewable energy, skills partnership and technology sharing, blue economy, artificial intelligence, cyber security and anti-money laundering initiatives. The issues were discussed at the 6th round of Senior Officials' Talks (SOT) between Bangladesh and Australia held in Dhaka on Wednesday. Dr Md Nazrul Islam, Secretary (Bilateral-East and West), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Sarah Storey, First Assistant Secretary, South and Central Asia Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Government of Australia led the respective delegations.

With the commitment to strengthen the ever growing bilateral relations between the two friendly countries, the 6th SOT was held in a 'warm and cordial' atmosphere, said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Thursday. The discussion featured constructive, forward-looking exchanges covering a wide spectrum of bilateral relations including sectoral cooperation, trade and investment, development partnership, migration and mobility, maritime cooperation, multilateral engagement, climate change and people-to-people linkages. Both sides also exchanged views on regional and global matters of mutual interest, including the Indo-Pacific, IORA engagements, and the Rohingya situation.

First Assistant Secretary Storey reiterated Australia's continued support to the Interim Government and its reform initiatives. About the upcoming General Election, she conveyed that Australia looks forward to a free and fair election and democratic transition in Bangladesh, including extending full support to the Bangladeshi expatriates for the postal voting. Storey highlighted Australian Government's priority areas in its relations with Bangladesh namely expansion of people to people linkages, growth of trade and investment, implementation of development partnership, support Bangladesh in managing Rohingyas, defence and security cooperation, Indo Pacific cooperation.

The Australian side conveyed their intention to prioritize Bangladesh as a secondary manufacturing location for its cotton and wool industries. Secretary Nazrul Islam proposed resumption of Work and Holiday visas for Bangladeshis in Australia, employment of Bangladeshi specified skilled workers in the Australian mining sector, establishment of University of Canberra's campus in Dhaka and collaboration between Australian TAFE and Bangladeshi TVET. He underscored the importance of increased high-level visits to advance the growing partnership between Bangladesh and Australia.

The talks concluded with the signing of 'MoU on Employment of the Dependents of Diplomatic and Consular Personnel between Bangladesh and Australia'. The visiting Australian delegation arrived in Dhaka on December 9 and attended the Joint Working Group on Trade and Investment Meeting under the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) at the Ministry of Commerce. The 7th SOT is expected to be held in Canberra next year.