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Cultural transformations

IACSS Biennial Conference in Dhaka

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One of the discussions on the first day of the conference at BRAC University. Photo: Golam Mahub

Department of English and Humanities, BRAC University hosted the Inter-Asia Cultural Studies Society (IACSS) Biennial Conference on December 17 and 18.

The conference, titled “Cultural Transformations: Development Initiatives and Social Movements”, opened at BRAC Inn Auditorium on December 17 morning.

The conference of the IACSS, which is a consortium of universities in South, East and South East Asia, critically explores the relationship between culture and socio-political/economic changes. This instalment of the conference focused on development and tried to explore its links with culture and collective values.

The conference has a three-fold objective: Stimulating the growth of cultural studies in Bangladesh and South Asia not only in academia but also in social sectors; contribute to “remapping” inter-Asia cultural studies to bring South Asia to the centre and provide the opportunity for formally launching the innovative inter-regional post-graduate programme which the Inter-Asia Cultural Studies Society is working towards designing.

Apart from BRAC University, participants of the conference included National University of Singapore; Lingnan University in Hong Kong; Tokyo University; Sungkonghoe University in Seoul; University of Jakarta; Centre for the Study of Culture and Society of Bangalore etc.

On December 17, the conference opened with a welcome address by Firdous Azim, Chairperson, Department of English and Humanities, BRAC University. In her speech Azim said: “We hope that many delegates from outside the country will find this conference useful as it provides them with another example of the way a small Asian country has tried to refashion itself. For our Bangladeshi participants, the opportunity to exchange views with scholars and activists from various locations would hopefully provide fresh impetus to their thoughts and ideas.

Professor A.K. Azad Chowdhury (State Minister), Chairperson, University Grants Commission of Bangladesh, was the chief guest. Professor Ainun Nishat, Vice Chancellor, BRAC University, chaired the opening session. Professor Syed Hashemi, Director, BRAC Development Institute and Acting Chairperson, Department of Economics and Social Sciences, gave the vote of thanks.

Keynote addresses -- “Being someone's symbolic other: A cultural study for South Asia” and “Presence of the Past: Cultural Connectivities and Continuities in Asia” -- were presented by Ashish Rajadhyaksha (Senior Fellow, Centre for the Study of Culture and Society, Bangalore, India) and Professor Perween Hasan (Vice Chancellor, Central Women's University, Dhaka) respectively.