Appointment to Bangladesh Chair at Heidelberg University

Political scientist Prof. Dr. Harun-or-Rashid, University of Dhaka, will occupy the Bangladesh Chair at Heidelberg University for six months starting in September, from where he will do research and give lectures. The visiting professorship, devoted to the historical and political development, the geography and culture of the South Asian country of Bangladesh, is located at the South Asia Institute (SAI) of Ruperto Carola. It is financed from funds supplied by the government of Bangladesh and enables academics from that country to spend six months at the SAI. During his time in Heidelberg, Prof. Rashid will focus his research particularly on the formation of the state of Bangladesh and its political development in the last 50 years.

The “Bangladesh Chair: Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Professorial Fellowship” is based on a memorandum of understanding signed in Heidelberg in December 2019 by Imtiaz Ahmed, then ambassador of Bangladesh in Germany, and Prof. Dr. Bernhard Eitel, Rector of Heidelberg University. A Bangladesh professorship for Bangladeshi academics was first established at the South Asia Institute back in 1999. The aim of the visiting professorship is to promote academic exchange between the SAI and academic institutions in Bangladesh and to intensify the attention given to the country and its development in South Asia research. The professorship is open to researchers from Bangladesh with a background in the disciplines represented at the SAI, which include geography, history, modern-language South Asia studies, the cultural and religious history of South Asia, political science, development economy and anthropology. They will make contributions from their respective field to research and teaching at the South Asia Institute. The visiting professors are jointly chosen by agreement between the South Asia Institute and a relevant commission in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. The foreign minister announced the nomination of Prof. Harun-or-Rashid in March this year.

Harun-or-Rashid studied political science at the University of Dhaka and the University of London, where he obtained his doctorate in 1983. Periods of research subsequently led him back to London and also, inter alia, to Sweden and Japan. Since 1995 he has been professor of political science at the University of Dhaka. In addition, from 2013 to 2021 he served two terms as vice-chancellor of the National University of Bangladesh. The author of 16 academic monographs,
he will focus during his time in Heidelberg on the state-building of Bangladesh in the light of political developments during 50 years of independence. In doing so, Prof. Harun-or-Rashid will investigate such topics as the role of political Islam, the judiciary in Bangladesh and the marginalisation of indigenous peoples there.

The South Asia Institute brings together research and teaching on South Asia and neighbouring cultural regions at Heidelberg University. It links up social sciences, economics and geography with historical and philological cultural studies and thereby offers a broad basis for contemporary South Asian studies. The SAI has branches and representations in India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and keeps up bilateral exchange programmes with the countries of South Asia. The new visiting professorship supplements the Heinrich Zimmer Chair for Indian Philosophy and Intellectual History, the Allama Iqbal Professorial Fellowship to extend research on Pakistan, and the Sri Lanka Chair.

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