

# Sell all your ploughs and buy a factory ship

**Prof. A.K.M. Aminul Haque**

**Founder of Faculty of Fisheries and Former Vice Chancellor, BAU explains how the collaboration began**



That nine-word challenge was given in my keynote address to the 1972 seminar on 'Formulation of an Agricultural Policy for a Developing Country'.

The underlying message in that statement was a call to give topmost priority to fisheries and aquaculture as the new-born nation state decided its policies. I had the firmest conviction that this sub-sector of agriculture had tremendous scope for development in Bangladesh, and had the potential, if developed and exploited scientifically, to replace jute as the number one foreign exchange earner for the country.

The Faculty of Fisheries at the then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) Agricultural University, was the first of its kind in the subcontinent, and only the fourth one in the world. To establish fisheries as a distinct academic discipline the University offered degrees at the Baccalaureate, Master's and Doctoral levels, and was envisioned and planned to be



a centre of excellence for fisheries education, and to be a world model for others to follow. We wanted to produce high quality graduates, who would be well-equipped with the required knowledge and information to meet the nation's expectations.

Twelve hand-picked teachers started the Faculty and built up a bigger team from the best graduates. The trained fish pathologist/parasitologist was awarded a scholarship for higher studies in India and we decided to release him and almost immediately contacted the British ODA in London, through the British Council in Dhaka, to arrange a teacher of the subject for 3 (three) months. The ODA responded to our SOS message almost immediately and informed us that they were asking Dr. Christina Sommerville from the University of Stirling to report to us at Mymensingh for three months.

Because of other commitments in Africa, Dr. Sommerville's first visit was for three weeks, not three months. Staff and students, although disappointed with a shorter visit were thrilled that they would get a reputed British teacher to cover the remaining portion of the relevant course. We gave Dr. Sommerville just one day's respite for some briefing at the British Council in Dhaka before taking up her assignment at BAU. The solution was an uninterrupted, intensive theory and practical period solely on fish pathology and parasitology.

This mutually agreed arrangement worked wonderfully well. Not only did Dr. Sommerville complete the designated portion of the course, but at our request she also reviewed our curricula of courses and syllabus in the subject, and also helped one of our Master's degree students to prepare a work-plan for his research. To round up her range of activities in BAU, she most graciously agreed to give a seminar-talk on parasites of farmed animals which was attended by the Vice-Chancellor, the teachers and students of the three Faculties of Veterinary Science, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries.

The visit of Dr. Sommerville to the BAU was followed by the placement of one of our Teaching Fellows at the Institute of Aquaculture at Stirling University thus



initiating what has by now become a very successful two-way collaboration process between the Faculty of Fisheries, Bangladesh Agricultural University and the Institute of Aquaculture, University of Stirling. Over the last 25 years the collaboration programme has subsequently covered under its umbrella the Ministry of Fisheries & Livestock and other educational institutions.

Today we are celebrating the very satisfactory and successful programme of collaboration in education, research and extension in the fields of fisheries and aquaculture. Let us consider that both the parties involved have benefited. The impetus provided by the positive response of the British ODA to the SOS call from the BAU Faculty of Fisheries has surely helped the Institute of Aquaculture spread its activities in fisheries and aquaculture education, research and extension around the world and we at the BAU Faculty of Fisheries feel proud to have had the vision translated into action that has brought about a revolution in the fisheries and aquaculture sector in Bangladesh.

