

Bangladesh Development Initiative

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Press Release

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Honoring Professor Samir K. Saha, PhD, FAAM, FRCPath

BDI Lifetime Achievement Award - 2023



The Bangladesh Development Initiative (BDI), a non-partisan research and advocacy group of independent scholars based in the United States, is pleased to announce that Dr. Samir K. Saha is the recipient of the 2023 *BDI Lifetime Achievement Award*.

Established in 2012, this prestigious award is designed “to honor outstanding individuals or organizations who, through their scholarly and/or policy and civic engagements, have contributed significantly to understanding the challenges, and the ideals that have led to the development of Bangladesh and have improved the quality of life for its citizens.” Through the award, the Executive Committee of the BDI recognizes and celebrates the work of a scholar or institution of high reputation and integrity whose work has inspired others to develop and implement ideas for the betterment of the people of Bangladesh.

This year, the BDI selection committee has determined that throughout his long and distinguished career, Professor Samir Saha has embodied the ideals of BDI by employing his scientific knowledge, talents, and skills to prevent infections and save lives among the pediatric population in Bangladesh with research and advocacy.

Dr. Saha was born on December 28, 1955. He attended Chandpur Government College. He earned his MSc from the Dhaka University in 1984 and his PhD from the Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University, India, in 1989. His daughter, Dr. Senjuti Saha, is a rising microbiologist who works with him as Director and Senior Scientist at Child Health Research Foundation. The two have been called the “dynamic duo of global health research” by Bill Gates. He is married to Dr. Setarunnahar, an eminent public health researcher who served as a government officer at DGHS and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Their son is currently pursuing his PhD in Population Health Sciences at Harvard University.

Professor Saha is the Founder and Executive Director of the Child Health Research Foundation. He is the Head of the Department of Microbiology at Bangladesh Shishu (Children) Hospital and Institute in Dhaka, Bangladesh. He is globally known for his research on child infectious diseases with a specific focus on pneumonia, meningitis, and enteric fever in Bangladesh. In his research, he strives to investigate the causative organisms behind these killer diseases, the drug resistance patterns and serotype distribution. His work facilitated the introduction of two life-saving vaccines, Hib and PCV10, into the National Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) of Bangladesh.

In recognition of his pathbreaking work in clinical microbiology, he received the *American Society for Microbiology (ASM) Award* in 2017. He also received a fellowship from the *American Academy of Microbiology*. The same year, he received (sharing with, Professor Shahida Hasnain of Pakistan) the *Carlos J. Finlay UNESCO Prize for Microbiology*. In fall of 2019, an article by Professor Saha and his co-authors published in *The Lancet* received *The Charles C. Shepard Science Award* for its outstanding contribution in public health. In November 2019, Professor Saha received membership (FRCPath) from the Royal College of Pathologist, United Kingdom. In 2020, Professor Saha and his daughter, Dr. Senjuti Saha, were recognized as Bill Gates’s Hero for their work to reduce child mortality rates among children in Bangladesh and improve global health equity.

The same year (2020), under the supervision of Dr. Samir Saha and the direction of Dr. Senjuti Saha, the first SARS-CoV-2 genome was sequenced in Bangladesh. For his lifelong commitment and devotion to the field of science and public health, Professor Saha received the prestigious *Ekushey Padak* (second highest civilian award in Bangladesh) in 2021 from the honorable Prime Minister of People’s Republic of Bangladesh.

Dr. Samir Saha is a member of the National Immunization Technical Advisory Group (NiTAG) of the Government of Bangladesh. He serves on the board of the International Society of Pneumonia and Pneumococcal Diseases (ISPPD). Along with his co-authors, he has published more than 200 papers in peer-reviewed scientific journals relating to childhood typhoid, pneumonia, and meningitis. Professor Saha is currently conducting several multi-site and multi-country research projects, funded by different international organizations.

The 2023 BDI Lifetime Achievement Award will be formally presented at BDI's next international conference in USA. As the recipient of this award, Professor Samir Saha will be invited to offer a keynote lecture on a subject of his choice.

For additional information on Bangladesh Development Initiative (BDI) and its mission, please visit www.bdiusa.org or contact Dr. Munir Quddus, President, BDI (muquddus@pvamu.edu).