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40
*Years
of
Independence*

A PUBLICATION BY THE BANGLADESH HIGH COMMISSION OF SINGAPORE



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National Heart Centre Singapore



National Neuroscience Institute



Singapore National Eye Centre



National Dental Centre Singapore



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05 Message from the Hon'ble President

On the occasion of our great Independence and National Day, I convey my heartfelt greetings and felicitations to the countrymen living at home and abroad. The historic Independence Day is a glorious day in our national life. We achieved our long-cherished independence through a nine-month long armed struggle and supreme sacrifices of millions.



07 Message from the Hon'ble Prime Minister

We have been striving hard to establish Bangladesh as a poverty-free, hunger-free, and illiteracy-free, progressive and democratic country by 2021, the Golden Jubilee year of our independence. I call upon every Bangalee to join this noble endeavour with their utmost sincerity, honesty and dedication being inspired with the spirit of patriotism.



09 Message from the Hon'ble Foreign Minister

I wish to thank all the officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and our Missions abroad who have devoted themselves to achieving our foreign policy goals. I take this opportunity to congratulate Bangladesh diaspora who are immensely contributing to the buoyancy of the economy of their country of origin as well as to their host countries.



10 In Conversation with the High Commissioner

With its healthy macro-economic fundamentals, socio-economic stability, cheap labour, domestic market of 150 million people and easy access to global market, Bangladesh has already established itself as the most desired place for foreign investment in South Asia.



13 Editor's Note

It is indeed my pleasure to publish this edition of "Opportunity Bangladesh". This goes into print at a time when the prospects of the country are looking extremely bright and the optimism of its citizens is on the upswing. There is little doubt that Bangladesh is making its mark on the international stage.



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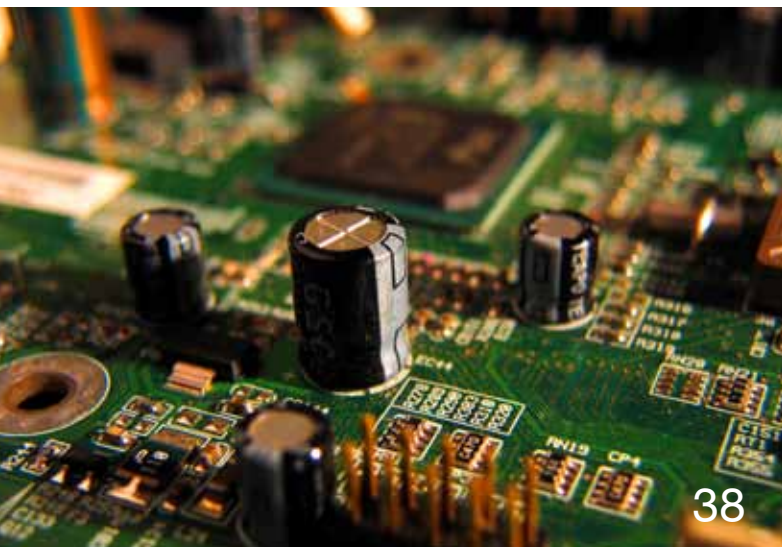
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President



On the occasion of our great Independence and National Day, I convey my heartfelt greetings and felicitations to the countrymen living at home and abroad.

The historic Independence Day is a glorious day in our national life. We achieved our long-cherished independence through a nine-month long armed struggle and supreme sacrifices of millions. On this solemn day, I pay my deep homage to the martyrs who laid down their lives in the war of liberation in 1971. I pray to the Almighty for the salvation of those departed immortal souls.

On this very memorable day, I recall with profound respect the father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who proclaimed country's Independence on March 26, 1971. Responding to his clarion call, the courageous people from all walks of life participated in the war of liberation

and achieved victory through armed struggle. I also recall with deep respect our four National Leaders, valiant freedom-fighters and organiser who rendered their dedicated efforts and enthusiastic support that accelerated the achievement of our victory. I also remember with deep respect the contributions of late Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Faizul Haque, Husyen Shaheed Suhrawardy and Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani towards inspiring our people at various stages of the struggle. The contributions of those valiant sons of the soil would forever be written in the history of our independence.

One of the prime objectives of our hard-earned independence was to build a happy and prosperous Bangladesh. Keeping that in mind, the Government is rendering untiring efforts in materialising the objectives of independence. Within a short span of time, we have achieved some significant progress in the field of agriculture, education, health, rural infrastructure, communication, ICT, youth, women and children, women empowerment, etc. at the national level. The Government is also very sincere to establish the Rule of Law, Human Rights in the country and Institutionalise democracy. Our achievement in the International arena is also notable. Despite attaining this progress, we have a long way to go in achieving the desired goals of independence. I believe concerted efforts from all are imperative in this regard.

It is a matter of satisfaction that the people of our country are democracy-loving. Without institutionalisation of

democracy, the overall development is hard to attain. Tolerance, fortitude and respect for other's opinion are the pre-conditions for a flourishing democracy. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to maintain patience, and forbearance at all level and to be respect other's opinion in a democratic pluralism.

Let us make our National Parliament as a centre of excellence in solving our national issues through discussion. I am confident, all irrespective of party affiliation would play a responsible role in fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of our common people by playing their due role.

The present Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has declared 'Vision 2021' with a view to attaining 'Golden Bangla' dreamt by Bangabandhu. I believe people from all strata of life would contribute to build an IT-based happy and prosperous Bangladesh by materialising the 'Vision' at the Golden Jubilee of independence in 2021.

On this Independence Day, I urge all, living at home and abroad, to work unitedly imbued with the spirit of the war of liberation to expedite economic self-reliance and democratic advancement as we are committed to building a respectful, happy and prosperous Bangladesh for our next generation.

May the Almighty be with us.

Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.

H.E. MD. ZILLUR RAHMAN,
Honourable President of the
People's Republic of Bangladesh

$$\begin{aligned}
 X, & - \frac{G.W.}{g} \ddot{x} + \frac{\partial x}{\partial \dot{x}} \dot{x} + \frac{\partial x}{\partial \dot{y}} \dot{y} + \frac{\partial x}{\partial \dot{z}} \dot{z} + \left(\frac{\partial x}{\partial \dot{\phi}} - \frac{G.W.}{g} \bar{v} \theta \right) \dot{\phi} - G.W. \theta \\
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 Z, & \frac{\partial z}{\partial \dot{x}} \dot{x} + \frac{\partial z}{\partial \dot{y}} \dot{y} + \left(\frac{\partial z}{\partial \dot{z}} - \frac{G.W.}{g} \right) \dot{z} + \frac{\partial z}{\partial \dot{\phi}} \dot{\phi} + \left(\frac{\partial z}{\partial \dot{g}} + \frac{G.W.}{g} \bar{v} \right) \dot{\phi} \\
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message from the Honourable

Prime Minister



I convey my heartiest greetings to my countrymen as well as to all expatriate Bangalees on the occasion of the great Independence and National Day 2011.

The greatest Bangalee of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman proclaimed the independence of Bangladesh through the wireless of the then EPR at the first hour of March the 26th in 1971 when Pakistani occupation forces launched genocide on unarmed Bangalees on the fatal night of the 25th March, 1971. With the proclamation, a sovereign, independent state, Bangladesh has come into being on the world map. After a 9-month bloody war under the brave and dauntless leadership of Bangabandhu, we earned the ultimate victory on the 16th December, 1971.

On this glorious day, I pay my homage to the three million heroic sons, who sacrificed their lives, and 200 thousand women, who lost their innocence in the War of Liberation.

I recall with deep gratitude the great leader of our liberation struggle, the greatest Bangalee of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

I also pay my humble tribute to the four national leaders Tajuddin Ahmed, Syed Najrul Islam, Capt M. Monsur Ali and AHM Kamrujjaman, who led the war under directive of Bangabandhu.

I pay my homage to the valiant freedom-fighters, and my sincere sympathies go to the wounded war veterans.

My sympathies also go to those who had lost their near and dear ones, and were subjected to brutal torture and subjugation during the war. I recall with gratitude our foreign friends who had extended their whole-hearted support and cooperation for the cause of our liberation.

On the eve of our Independence Day, I urge countrymen to remain alert against the conspiracies of anti-democratic forces. The defeated anti-liberation, communal and identified reactionary

forces are out to undo the democratic and development process of our beloved country as our government has taken steps to start the trial of war criminals. I urge the countrymen to foil all ill-designed plots against the country and the people.

The independence earned through huge bloodbath and sacrifice is our greatest achievement. To make this achievement meaningful, we have to devote ourselves in nation-building activities being imbued with the spirit of our great liberation war.

By cherishing the true history of our liberation war close to our hearts, we have to go ahead in achieving the objective of the 'charter of change'. The new generation has to be enlightened with the true history of our Liberation War.

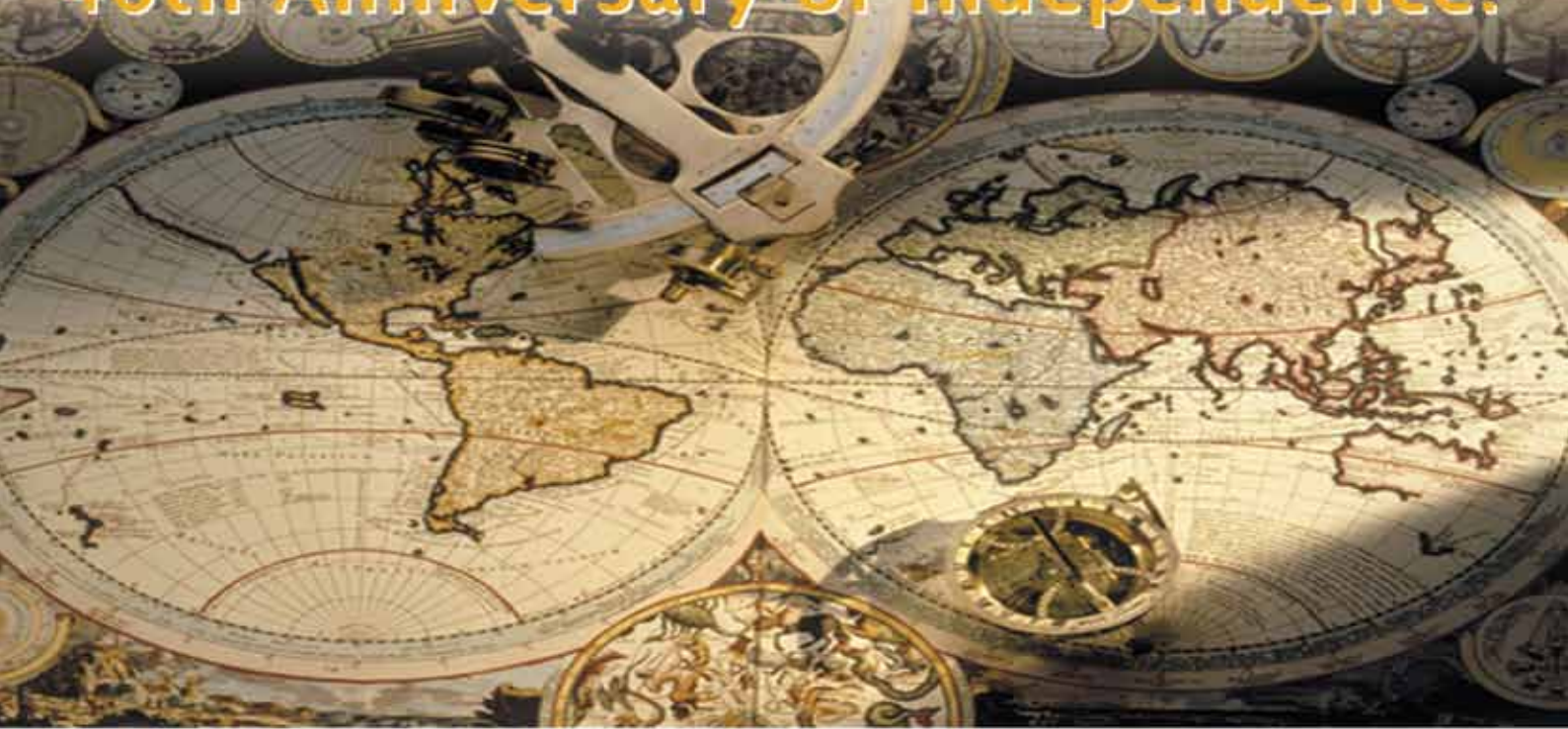
We have been striving hard to establish Bangladesh as a poverty-free, hunger-free, and illiteracy-free, progressive and democratic country by 2021, the Golden Jubilee year of our independence. I call upon every Bangalee to join this noble endeavour with their utmost sincerity, honesty and dedication being inspired with the spirit of patriotism.

With our united efforts, Insha-Allah, we would surely achieve our 'Golden Bangladesh' as envisioned by the Father of the Nation.

H.E. SHEIKH HASINA,
Honourable Prime Minister of the
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Foreign Minister



Today is the historic Independence and National Day of Bangladesh. Forty years ago, on this day, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Father of the Nation declared Bangladesh an independent and sovereign country. This declaration marked the culmination of our epic struggle for an independent entity. On this great Day, I extend my warmest felicitations and greetings to all Bangladesh nationals living at home and abroad.

I recall with profound respect our undisputed leader Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, our four national leaders, Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahamad, M. Mansur Ali, A.H.M Kamaruzzaman who steered our heroic war of liberation. I pay deep tributes to the valiant freedom fighters and the martyrs whose sacrifices have led us to our independence. I also salute those brave women, the biranganas, who were subjected to heinous form of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Since our independence in 1971, Bangladesh has evolved significantly. We have established a tolerant, pluralistic and egalitarian society, and inclusive democracy and gained recognition from the world community. Bangladesh today is one of the 11 emerging economies in the world, after Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC). Bangladesh is a role model for fighting poverty and extremism, empowering women, in disaster management and coping with the challenges posed by global climate change. For more than two decades Bangladesh remains a frontline contributor

to the UN peacekeeping missions across the globe.

After the historic December elections in 2008, which brought the democratic and secular forces to office with sweeping majority of the Parliament, Bangladesh is now witnessing rapid transformation under the dynamic leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Our country is making remarkable strides in various sectors. Its impressive achievement particularly in the social sector continues to receive recognition in the international community. The winning of MDG Award by the Hon'ble Prime Minister during the 65th UNGA for achieving targeted reduction in infant mortality is a testimony in this regard. The Hon'ble Prime Minister announced Vision 2021 to transform Bangladesh into a Digital Bangladesh and to graduate Bangladesh to a middle-income country by the time we will be celebrating our golden Jubilee of our Independence. Our government has also taken various steps to implement these goals. Needless to say, in this onerous task, Bangladesh would need the support of the international community including the members of our diaspora.

The present government under the leadership of Bangabandhu's daughter Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is committed to establish the values and aspirations of the war of independence. After assuming office on 6 January 2009, we have been trying relentlessly to establish a society based on Rule of Law, strengthen democratic institutions, uphold human rights and ensure good governance. The present Government remains committed to bring the alleged war criminals to justice and I would like to reiterate that the initiative stems from our policy to establish Rule of Law and end the culture of impunity and in no way of act of vendetta. I take this opportunity to reiterate to all including the international community that the trial would be carried out in the line with the international standard.

On foreign policy issues, the Government has been consistent in pursuing the policy in line with the motto "friendship with all and malice towards none" as envisioned by the Father of the Nation. Bangladesh now enjoys excellent relations with the outside

world due to our principled position. Bilateral relations between Bangladesh and the friendly countries including our neighbours have expanded in depth and dimension, and I hope that it will be improved further in the coming days. Bangladesh is happy to be one of the hosts of the ICC, and this also manifests the credibility and credentials Bangladesh enjoys among the international community. Bangladesh's election to a large number of UN and international bodies bears the testimony of the trust Bangladesh continues to enjoy in the comity of nations.

I wish to highlight here that our diaspora comprises an important element in our foreign policy objectives. The Government is committed to ensure their all-out welfare. Despite serious logistical and economic constraints, the Government, under special directives from Hon'able Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, recently took swift action, not only to repatriate thousands of Bangladesh nationals but also to ensure the welfare of those who were distressed following political upheavals in some countries. More importantly, we have been able to address the situation promptly with the assistance of the international community without compromising our bilateral relations with the affected countries.

I wish to thank all the officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and our Missions abroad who have devoted themselves to achieving our foreign policy goals. I take this opportunity to congratulate Bangladesh diaspora who are immensely contributing to the buoyancy of the economy of their country of origin as well as to their host countries.

On this great Day, let us renew our commitment to turn Bangladesh into a country free from poverty, free of hunger and extremism. I urge all our citizens including our diaspora to come forward to achieve this goal.

Joy Bangla.

Joy Bangabandhu.

H.E. DR. DIPU MONI, MP,
Honourable Foreign Minister of the
People's Republic of Bangladesh

in conversation with

the High Commissioner



Bangladesh celebrates 40 years of Independence. Taking stock, how would you summarise the success story of the Nation, which was built on the sacrifices of the great freedom fighters?

26th March is the day of supreme importance in our national history. The history of 26th March dates back to 1971 when our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared the independence of Bangladesh. While we celebrate this occasion, we also recall with respect the valiant freedom fighters and pay deep homage to the martyrs of the war of liberation. We also remember the martyrs and heroes of the various other movements and struggle whose sacrifices made Bangladesh a sovereign state.

Bangladesh has made significant socio-economic development during the last four decades of its existence. Among those, her triumph in maintaining food security by transforming the agricultural sector into one of the most productive farm economies in South Asia is a major success story. It has also made successful strides toward demographic transition by bringing down its population growth rate to less than 1.5% in 2010. Moreover, it has managed natural disasters well. In areas of health care and education, Bangladesh has made substantial improvements over the

years. With respect to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG) indicators, Bangladesh is also successfully heading towards achieving all of them within the stipulated time.

On the economic front, it has been maintaining a GDP growth of more than 6 % for over the last two decades. This year, it is expected to grow over 6.7 %. Growth in the manufacturing sector has already exceeded 8%. Despite economic downturn in the major economies, our country's export market is performing fairly well.

Our export earnings for the current fiscal year are expected to register 36% more growth than last year. Apparel export is expected to cross US\$18 billion this year. Frozen food, finished leather, leather goods and agro products are also significantly contributing to the export basket.

Bangladesh is adding new items to its export list almost every day. It has silently transformed itself from a ship breaking country to shipbuilding and ship exporting nation. Pharmaceuticals, IT, ICT, light engineering, agro-products, fisheries and toiletries are the other areas where Bangladesh is doing exceedingly well. With a prospective GDP growth of around 8 % initially and around 10% after 2015, the country is progressing towards

a middle income country by 2021 as envisioned by our Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. In her "Vision 2021" statement, she has given top most priority to a knowledge based society. In a forward looking and pro-business mind frame, her government is working towards creating a democratic environment and promoting accountability in the government.

The Hon'ble Prime Minister, as a first step towards that end, has declared her vision for a "Digital Bangladesh" which is intended to help increasing operational efficiency and productivity. It is expected that digitalization will help accelerate economic development and increase the competitive edge of Bangladesh in the world market.

All investor's eyes are on Asia, India and China topping the charts. As part of Asia, what is Bangladesh doing to attract a slice of the pie?

Bangladesh is fast becoming an attractive investment and business destination, prompting both JP Morgan and Goldman Sachs to include the country in their respective "Frontier Five" and "Next 11" group of developing nations. With its healthy macro-economic fundamentals, socio-economic stability, cheap labour, domestic market of 150 million people and easy access to global market, Bangladesh has already established itself as the most desired place for foreign investment in South Asia. Its liberal investment policies, including tax holidays; concessionary duty on the import of machinery; remittance of royalty; 100% foreign equity and full repatriation facilities of dividend, are bound to attract foreign direct investment.

Bangladesh is also strategically located next to India, Nepal, Bhutan, China and the ASEAN markets. As the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) comes into force, investors in Bangladesh will enjoy duty-free access to India and other member countries. Bangladesh also enjoys duty and quota free accesses in the

European Union, Canada, Australia and Japan. Additionally Bangladesh enjoys limited duty free access to China and South Korea under the WTO initiative.

There is no denying the fact that this century will be Asia's with its two biggest economies - China and India leading the growth. Nevertheless, I would say Bangladesh is a country to watch out. Due to increasing demand for higher wages, escalating rental fees of factory spaces and preferences for high tech industries, countries like China, India, South Korea and even Vietnam are gradually losing their competitive edges in many areas of the global export market. Bangladesh with its educated young professionals and cheap and skilled labour is gradually filling up the voids left by these more developed economies.

Bangladesh has already emerged as the third largest exporter in apparels. It has also become a popular hub for building of smaller and medium sized ocean going vessels. Electrical and electronic, household appliances, leather goods, agro-foods, IT, ICT and pharmaceuticals are the areas where Bangladesh has a fair chance to dominate the global market in the very near future. The Bangladesh government is always pro-business.

Our Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, since forming her government in January 2009, has initiated a number of new economic policies that help business. Her government has given top priority in infrastructure building that will provide Bangladesh a solid platform for growth of the manufacturing sector and promotion of trade and investment.

Considering the growing energy needs, the government has undertaken immediate, medium and long-term programmes to meet the power demand. All measures are taken to add 7000 MW of electricity to the national grid within the next three years. Proposals for adding another 12,000 MW in the next 5 years are also in the planning process. Bangladesh is also at the final stages of negotiations with Russia for setting up of a 2000MW nuclear power plant. An LNG terminal is going to be set up in Chittagong for importing liquefied natural gas for industrial use. The Government has also given top most priority in the improvement and

modernization of Dhaka - Chittagong rail and road communication, the lifeline of the country's economy, by upgrading the rail line from single to double track, and highway from two lanes to four lanes in next two years. On top of that, the construction of US\$2.9 billion 6.1 km long road cum rail "Padma Bridge", expected to begin in the middle of this year, will unlock the potential and transform the lives of nearly 30 million Bangladeshis living in the country's Southwest region. Moreover, by reducing distances to Dhaka by almost 100km, the bridge will facilitate regional trade with SAARC countries, while accelerating growth and development in the country as a whole.

Could you please update us on the current volume of FDI in Bangladesh and which are the most promising sectors for FDI?

Due to the investor friendly initiatives of our government and a stable outlook of our economy, recent years have seen a surge in FDI in Bangladesh. From July 2009 to February 2010, 89 new foreign and joint venture investment projects were registered with the Bangladesh Board of Investment totalling US \$590 million.

So far, Bangladesh has received over US\$ 8 billion in foreign direct investment mainly in backward linkage industries for RMG, telecommunication, power, oil and gas exploration sectors. I should mention here that Singaporean companies are recorded as the 9th largest foreign investors in Bangladesh.

The potential opportunities for new investments in Bangladesh are in banking, energy, infrastructure, agro-based industries, textiles, outsourcing, pharmaceuticals, healthcare, biotechnology, light engineering, shipbuilding, tourism, IT, among others. In today's globalised world, prudent investors are taking advantage of opportunities for expanding their businesses. Our policy is to work in partnership for mutual gains and benefits. I therefore, invite Singapore based companies to take advantage of the moment and come to Bangladesh with their businesses.

Bangladesh and Singapore share excellent bilateral ties; please update us on the latest developments in various sectors.

Singapore recognized Bangladesh in February 1972. Since then relations between Bangladesh and Singapore are excellent. Bilateral relations have also been on the rise as demonstrated by the exchanges of visits and initiatives at various official levels. The people to people relations between Bangladesh and Singapore have always been warm.

In recent years, several trade and investment delegations from both the countries visited each other's capital. All these visits further cemented the bilateral relations. However, there remains enormous untapped potential for cooperation between the countries in myriad areas such as trade, investment, tourism, education, infrastructure development etc.

Singapore is an important trading partner of Bangladesh. Trade between the two countries has been increasing steadily over the years. In 2009-2010, export to Singapore was US\$ 80 million while its import from Singapore was \$2.31 billion covering mostly capital goods. As of now, 103 Singapore based companies have made investments in telecom, textiles, electronic & electrical goods, RMG, LPG bottling, construction industry, chemicals, fish processing etc. It is estimated that the proposed Singapore investment in Bangladesh is close to one billion US dollars.

I am confident that in the years ahead, Bangladesh under the leadership of the Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, and the Republic of Singapore under Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, will further guide these close relations to new and greater heights.

How many Bangladeshis are currently in Singapore and in what sectors are they employed? How much do they remit back home?

It is estimated that more than 100,000 Bangladeshi nationals are currently working in Singapore. Out of them 90% are skilled and semi-skilled migrant workers employed in ship building and construction sectors. Among the professionals, most are mariners followed by engineers, bankers, management consultants and university and polytechnic faculty members. Bangladeshis are also involved in business as well. In the shipping business some are

doing exceedingly well. Bangladeshis in Singapore are playing an important role in our national development by sending huge amount of remittances to Bangladesh. In 2009-10, a total of US \$ 193 million was sent to Bangladesh by the expatriate Bangladeshis.

What is your national Day message to Bangladeshis in Singapore and your Singaporean friends?

On the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the National and Independence Day of Bangladesh, it is with great honour and satisfaction that I extend our heartiest felicitations to our Singaporean friends and fellow Bangladeshis in the Republic of Singapore.

I am happy to note that there is a sizeable Bangladeshi community in Singapore. I am proud to say that they have carried the name of Bangladesh exemplarily and have built an honest and hardworking reputation for themselves over the years. I hope they will continue to do their good jobs. On a personal note, I would like to extend my

appreciation to the Singaporean people for their warm welcome and hospitality since I joined as Bangladesh High Commissioner. On behalf of the Hon'ble President, Hon'ble Prime Minister and the people of Bangladesh, I wish to offer my warmest greetings to His Excellency S R Nathan, President of the Republic of Singapore, His Excellency Lee Hsien Loong, the Prime Minister and its people. May Singapore continue to enjoy peace and prosperity in the years ahead.

What are the initiatives taken by the "Make Bangladeshis feel at home" programme and how do you handle their problems if any?

Our High Commission places highest priority in the smooth handling of the expatriate community and their welfare issues. We know they are working here leaving behind their near and dear ones. Therefore, we want them to keep in close touch with the High Commission for all their work related or social needs. Bangladeshis in Singapore are socially very active. A number of social and

cultural organizations like the Bangladesh Business Chamber, Bangladesh Society and Singapore Chapter of Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh are working among the Bangladeshi community. Bangladeshis also run two schools where Bangla is taught as per curriculum of the Singapore Ministry of Education.

The High Commission has also been working ceaselessly to retain the existing manpower market in Singapore, to enhance it to the maximum limit without compromising the interests of the workers. To do so, the Mission is implementing the guidelines provided by the relevant Bangladesh authorities as well as making necessary recommendations to them when the situation demands.

We do take care of our migrant workers' employment related complaints, compensation and salary issues, and take up these issues with their employers and the local authorities as and when necessary. Singapore's Ministry of Manpower is also a great help and they extend their helping hand all the time.



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Editor's Note



It is indeed my pleasure to publish this edition of "Opportunity Bangladesh". This goes into print at a time when the prospects of the country are looking extremely bright and the optimism of its citizens is on the upswing.

Singapore has had an extremely warm and deep rooted relationship with Bangladesh, especially with the growing people to people relations. This has helped take the bilateral relations between the two countries to the next level.

There is little doubt that Bangladesh is making its mark on the international stage. In February this year Citigroup categorized Bangladesh as one of Global Growth Generator countries. Earlier JP Morgan named Bangladesh as one of the five key markets in a report titled "Frontier Five".

In 2005, Goldman Sachs identified Bangladesh in a group of nations which they called the Next Eleven (or N-11). What all these reports point to is the fact that Bangladesh has the potential to become one of the world's largest economies in the 21st century.

What makes Bangladesh so attractive?

Many point to the economic stability, political maturity, rise in education, openness of trade and proactive investment regulations. There is also a general consensus that the potential of the young, dynamic, educated and English-speaking population knows no bounds. Labour costs across a range of sectors are extremely competitive. And in keeping with the pledges and commitments made in the Election Manifesto, Bangladesh is making every effort to implement positive changes in various industries. Power, Energy, Mineral Resources, Agriculture, Information and Communication Technology are just a few areas in which great strides have been made.

January 2011 also marked the completion of two years in office by the present government. The pro people government led by the dynamic daughter of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has made great strides in the socio economic climate and governance

of the country.

Put this robust economy together with the country's proximity to two of the world's top markets - India and China - and you could not have asked for a better investment destination! The government is also doing its bit to promote an investor friendly environment. So why would anyone want to miss this opportunity?

Bangladesh is also fast becoming a prime location for ecotourism and adventure tourism. Pristine beaches and verdant forests abound in this yet unexplored country. Special mention needs to be made here of The Sundarbans, which is a vast treasure trove of biological diversity harbouring millions of species of plants, insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. Today, there is every reason for Bangladesh to position itself as a major tourist magnet.

We are also happy that this edition coincides with a major global sporting event being held in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is co-hosting the cricket World Cup - and as everyone knows, cricket is an all-consuming phenomenon in the south Asia region.

With all this in the background, it is indeed an honour to bring out this issue of "Opportunity Bangladesh" on the occasion of the country's 40th Anniversary of Independence.

Happy reading!

NOMITA DHAR
Editor

At a Glance: Two Years of Progress



JANUARY 6, 2011 MARKED THE COMPLETION OF TWO YEARS IN OFFICE BY THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT, THE PRO-PEOPLE GOVERNMENT LED BY THE ILLUSTRIOUS DAUGHTER OF THE FATHER OF THE NATION BANGABANDHU SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN, 'DESHRATNA' PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HASINA HAS ACHIEVED MANY SUCCESSES IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND GOVERNANCE ARENA DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS.

Successful strides in nation-building have been made keeping in mind the pledges and commitments made in the election manifesto. In line with these successes, the country is ahead in the application of digital technologies and is likely to complete implementing it earlier than 2021 - the golden jubilee year of the country's independence. Thus it hopes to keep pace with the rest of the world, and hopes to join the group of countries belonging to the middle-income group.

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

E-services have been extended up to the union level under the Access to Information (A2I) project. Services have been provided directly to 85,000 customers through the establishment of union information service centres. Representatives and officials from the local and field levels have been imparted training on digital technologies so that they may extend services to other citizens. A new momentum has been generated in various fields like agriculture, trade and commerce, sale of railway tickets, announcement of examination results, payment of bills, etc.

Decision-making has been made easier – thanks to the video conference systems installed in various zones under the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA). Automation systems have been put in place for sanctioning imports and exports at Dhaka and Chittagong EPZs. A new power plant with a capacity of 90 megawatts has been set up in the EPZ area and agreements have been signed for an additional 290 megawatts of electricity. Around 270,000 jobs have been created in the industrial establishments of the EPZs, and helping in the alleviation of poverty. Around

10,000 landless, uprooted and destitute families have already been rehabilitated under the Asrayan (Phase-2) project. The Asrayan-2 project was started in July 2010 and is expected to build barracks and houses in the coastal regions, Chittagong hill tracts and other areas for rehabilitating 50,000 families by June 2014. Three guidelines are now being finalised to be implemented under the Policies and Strategies for Public-Private Partnership (PPP), 2010.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Bangladesh has made a mark in its foreign relations during the last two years. The trust and confidence reposed in Bangladesh by the international community and its acceptability as a responsible member of the United Nations were demonstrated by the fact that it had been elected in various international fora including CEDAW, UNDP, UNICEF, UNEP, UNESCO, WHO, ITU, ECOSOC, Human Rights Council etc at elections held in the last two years. Bangladesh has remained engaged in promoting global peace and security and continued to contribute to the UN peace keeping operations. Currently, Bangladesh has more than 10,000 peacekeepers serving in 11 UN missions globally.

In line with the present Government's policy of 'friendship towards all and malice towards none', Bangladesh has maintained friendly and effective bilateral relations with neighbouring countries and with other nations in the region and beyond. It has created a positive image globally by establishing itself as a moderate, secular country, and through its commitment and substantive actions for poverty alleviation, women's empowerment and antiterrorism. At the regional level, by pioneering the formulation of SAARC

HONOURABLE PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HASINA HAS ACHIEVED MANY SUCCESSES IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND GOVERNANCE ARENAS DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS.

Charter of Democracy, Bangladesh has strongly advocated for democratic practices within the region. At the multilateral level, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has led efforts to expand trade and business, to attract FDI, for planned migration and expansion of labour markets overseas and to ensure energy and food security.

The Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presented Bangladesh's vulnerability to ill effects of climate change at the UN General Assembly and other important UN Conferences during the last two years. Bangladesh's role at the Copenhagen and Cancun UN Conferences was duly recognised, and the need for establishing funds for mitigation and adaptation strategies to fight the effect of climate change was acknowledged by the participating member countries.

LAW, JUSTICE AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS MINISTRY

Those accused in the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) case have been put under trial following the mutiny and brutal killings perpetrated at the Pikhana headquarters. The Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) has passed the International Crimes Tribunal (amendment) Act, 2009 in order to try those people who committed genocide, crimes against humanity and war-crimes during the liberation war.

The number of judges in the appellate division of Bangladesh Supreme Court has been raised to 11 from 7 for expeditious disposal of pending cases.

AGRICULTURE MINISTRY

With the introduction of the agricultural input assistance cards, farmers are now receiving various agricultural assistance including subsidies given by the government through 10 taka bank accounts. The prices of non-urea fertilisers have been reduced by almost 75 percent. The discovery of genome sequence of jute with government assistance has been a big success.

Other successes include provision of financial incentives, agricultural equipments for farmers with a 25% subsidy, and distribution of 15,000 ribbon-tools free of cost among jute farmers for extracting jute-fibres through ribbon-retting method.

EDUCATION MINISTRY

The National Education Policy has been unanimously approved by the Jatiya Sangsad. It was possible to hand over text books to all students of the primary and secondary schools, madrasas and technical education institutions on the very first day of 2010.

As the drop-out rate has declined, an initiative was taken this year for distributing 230 million text-books among students, which is higher than last year's 190million. Madrasa education is being modernised with the new education policy attaching more importance to it.

HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE MINISTRY

A total of 9,722 community clinics have been set up as consultation centres for primary healthcare, family planning and other services for the poor and marginalised population. 780 doctors have been selected through the 28th BCS examination and another 3,551 are working on an ad-hoc basis.

Besides, 1722 senior staff nurses and 6,391 health assistants have also been appointed. The Drug Administration Directorate has been upgraded into a department in order to ensure production of quality drugs and strengthen the opportunities for exporting medicines.

POWER, ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES MINISTRY

For the first time in the country, over 10 million energy-saving CFL bulbs have been distributed among 45,00,000 electricity consumers. As a result, around 80 to 100 megawatts of electricity is being saved. The Bangladesh Gas Act, 2010 has been passed to ensure its proper use. The government has created a gas development fund for rendering assistance to various projects in the sector.

SCIENCE AND INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY MINISTRY

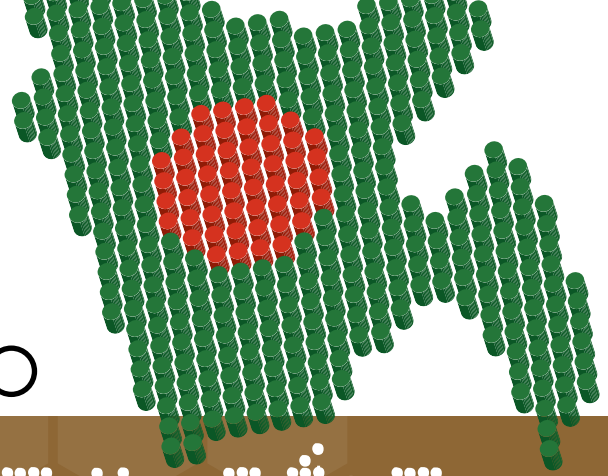
A hi-tech park has been set up at Kaliakoir and 80 incubators have been installed at BSRS Bhaban of Karwan Bazar, Dhaka for expanding hi-tech and knowledge-based industries. A framework agreement has been signed with the Russian Federation for establishing Rooppur Atomic Energy Power Plant in order to meet the ever-increasing demand of electricity in the country.

The 'Bangabandhu Fellowship' has been introduced for grooming young scientists and researchers in the country.

COMMUNICATIONS MINISTRY

Funding for the construction of the Padma Bridge, between Mawa in Munshiganj and Jazira in Madaripur has been worked out. The bridge is expected to unlock the potential and transform the lives of millions of people in the Southwest region. The bridge will facilitate regional trade, accelerate growth and development in the country as a whole. The investment agency for the construction of elevated expressway to reduce traffic jams in the metropolis has now been finalised. It has been decided to convert Bangladesh Railway into a separate division.

The construction of a new broad-gauge railway line from Kashiani to the mausoleum of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and from Ishwardi to Dhalar-char via Pabna has started. Arrangements has been made for submission of vehicle tax through online banking.



The Dream of a Digital Bangladesh



BY ARCHITECT YEAFESH OSMAN

THE BENGALIEE NATION HAD A DREAM, WHICH WAS SHOWN BY THE GREATEST BENGALIEE OF ALL TIMES - THE FATHER OF THE NATION BANGABANDHU SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN. WE ACHIEVED OUR INDEPENDENCE THROUGH A WAR OF LIBERATION AFTER A LONG STRETCH OF MOVEMENTS AND STRUGGLE IN ORDER TO REALIZE THAT DREAM.



Half of that dream has now materialised, but our struggle for freedom for economic emancipation is yet to be crowned with success. The dream of a Golden Bangla is yet to be attained. Bangabandhu's daughter and leader of the masses Hon'able Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had declared a pledge to build a Digital Bangladesh based on 'Vision-2021' in the election manifesto of 2008, keeping in mind her father's dream. The main idea of a Digital Bangladesh is to groom the nation as a knowledge-based middle-income country by the year 2021 through utilisation of technologies. It aspires for a poverty and hunger-free Bangladesh through overall upliftment of the living standard of Bangla's inhabitants. The present government has worked relentlessly during the past two years for achieving that objective. It is a matter of satisfaction that the use of technology, especially that of information technology, has increased substantially due to the involvement of the masses in sincere endeavours of the government. People have realized that positive changes were taking place in their lives due to application of technology. I consider it to be a huge success of the government. The government has succeeded in creating a space of confidence among the citizenry.

The development vision of Hon'able Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has aimed to bring backward segments of the country's

population to the mainstream by offering them additional assistance. In order to materialise that, our objective has been to build a Digital Bangladesh by involving all citizens of the country. *Technology is considered/A path for progress/Digital Bangladesh/ Will be for all our masses.*

We feel more encouraged when we hear from the IT technologists of the present generation: "Digital Bangladesh is not a distant world. It is our own world. It is merely a guarantee for becoming more developed, speedier and acquiring more sensitive technology at affordable prices. Again, it also implies different worlds for different individuals. For a student, it is an assurance for obtaining high quality education. For a farmer, it is a guarantee of a market for the crops he produces. For a sick man, it is a guarantee of getting good treatment, freedom from standing in the queue day after day. For a government employee, it is the best medium for communication and evaluation of his work. For a pensioner, a freedom fighter and a widow, it is a guarantee for obtaining safety allowances and pensions with transparency. The main theme in the philosophy of Digital Bangladesh is to ensure the empowerment of people through optimum utilisation of technology, establishment of good governance and above all to meet the needs of all citizens at their doorsteps. Digital Bangladesh will be implemented for the welfare of all citizens irrespective of their wealth or status."

The ICT Policy was adopted in April soon after formation of the present government. A total of 306 action plans were taken up in its main programme for implementation. The policy has fixed immediate steps, medium-term measures and long-term actions for all ministries. As a result, all bodies of the government are getting ready for e-governance. The Ministry of Science and Information & Communication Technology is coordinating the whole endeavour.



Many of you have witnessed the digital innovation fair held at Bangabandhu Novo-theatre earlier this year. Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had inaugurated the fair. Local and foreign policy-makers, experts and officials from over hundred organizations were present at the inauguration. Explaining the significance of Digital Bangladesh, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had said then, "It implied paying bills through mobile phones, buying railway tickets from home, getting healthcare from upazila level doctors while staying in the village." She further said that "We had made a pledge before the election to build a digital Bangladesh. We have chosen information technology as a tool to fulfil that commitment. We seek to ensure transparency, accountability and good governance at all layers of administration. Those who are working and providing leadership to the administrative and service sectors of the government have to think anew. They will have to find out how services can be ensured for the country's 150 million people. We do not want the people to move from door to door of administration for services; rather, we want services to reach the doorsteps of the citizens. We have for the first time succeeded in presenting our good intentions before the people. You have noticed, that even the secretaries of ministries were now telling the people what they would do for the common man during the coming year. These are big changes. We also witnessed during the digital fair that a canopy of honest competition has been put in place among the concerned ministries in this area."

Many things can be said about our successes in information technology during the past two years. These include getting exam results through SMS and registering for university admission from home. Mention can also be made about the delivery orders received by sugarcane growers through mobile SMS. If I say in a simple language, then it would sound something like this:

To register or to get result/ Please send SMS/It saves time and expense/ The country is changing. At mill-gates the sugarcane growers/ No more need to stand in queues/It saves time and expense/The country is changing. Tenders are also online/Various tickets and bills/Saves so many hassles/Difficulties will soon vanish.

I am certain that people's interest in technology, especially information technology, has increased because of these developments. As a consequence, the number of mobile-phone users has increased by over 20 million during the past two years. And at the governmental level, we were also inspired to establish 4,501 union information service centres throughout the country. Even unions without electricity have not been left out. Besides, information centres have also been set up at 125 upazilas and information portals were launched for 64 districts. We are optimistic that by the grace of Almighty, we shall succeed in building a digital Bangladesh as desired by Bangabandhu's daughter, before the year 2021.

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TRAVELING THROUGH BANGLADESH: MEETING HISTORY, CULTURE AND NATURE

BY SHAFIQUE ALAM MEHDI
SECRETARY IN CHARGE, MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

WITH IMPECCABLE NATURAL BEAUTY, THOUGHT-PROVOKING ANCIENT RELICS AND THE INDOMITABLE HOSPITALITY OF THE PEOPLE, BANGLADESH HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE AN AMAZING TOURIST DESTINATION.

Situated between India and Myanmar, with the entire south edged by the Bay of Bengal, this south Asian country is criss-crossed by hundreds of rivers, making it an interesting delta. Sprawling green hills and valleys, with mangrove forests and long stretches of sandy beaches, add value to the spectacular natural beauty of this country. No wonder, this land attracted priests, traders and wanderers from different parts of the world since ancient times.

Bangladesh is a land of diversity. A population of 150 million includes Muslims, Hindus, Christians and Buddhists who live in absolute communal harmony. The widely varied religious stock has an impact on the cultural diversity making it colourful, interesting and lively. There are over 700 spots of tourist interest in the country. These include nature driven ones like sea, beach, green valleys, forests, archeological and historical sites, iconic religious places, cultural events and man-made wonders. Thus Bangladesh is a unique tourist destination where one can find the scope for all kinds of tourist interests.

Being the world's single largest mangrove forest, the Sundarbans is a pride for the country. Located in the south western part of Bangladesh, it is now a hotspot for eco-tourism. Spread over an area of 6000 sq km of deltaic swamps, it is a sanctuary for hundreds of

rare species of flora and fauna. Most importantly, it is the home of the Royal Bengal Tiger. One would also find crocodiles, monkeys, dolphins, spotted deer and several other interesting creatures. The innumerable rivers and creeks are a wonderful repository of biodiversity.

The Sundarbans is a World Heritage Site, declared by the UNESCO and was recently shortlisted to be polled as a wonder of the world. Visiting the Sundarbans is a memorable experience. While having the opportunity of seeing rare wild animals and birds, one can also see how thousands of brave men and women engage themselves in fishing in the rivers and creeks, and collect honey from the dense forests.

Down in the southeastern tip, the longest unbroken sea beach in Cox's Bazar, attracts tens of thousands of visitors all year round. The calm blue waters of the Bay of Bengal caresses the 120 km long sandy beach that stretches along a range of picturesque green hills.

Besides bathing and basking, one can also enjoy a variety of water sports including surfing and water skiing. The site is fast becoming a popular spot for beach football and volleyball besides several cultural events. With hundreds of comfort ensuring hotels, tribal bazaars and imposing pagodas around, Cox's Bazar is often



dubbed as the tourist capital of Bangladesh. Another upcoming seafront tourist destination in the country is Kuakata. It is in the southernmost tip of the country from where one can have the rare opportunity of watching at both the sunrise and sunset.

The Hill districts in the southeastern region of the country commands an exotic view of natural beauty. Accessible by road from the port city of Chittagong, it is a tranquil haven for nature lovers. Green hills and sprawling valleys are often dotted with waterfalls and small lakes. The unique lifestyle of the tribal people adds value to the romance of this paradise. With no sound and air pollution, these hilly districts can be the finest destinations for those wanting to get away from the modern urban life and embrace a domain of tranquility.

Up in the northeastern part of Bangladesh, in the region of Sylhet, sprawling tea gardens offer panoramic views. It is like a green carpet rolled out for miles and miles. For centuries, these gardens have been producing tea. The plucking of tea leaves by thousands of women in the waist-level thick tea bushes itself is a spectacular view. In the midst of these tea garden valleys, natural waterfalls make it more scenic. The Madhabkunda waterfall is the most prominent one with tens of thousands of tourists visiting it every year.

Between Sylhet and Mymensingh in the north-central part, huge water bodies dominate the landscape, offering another opportunity for nature adventurers. Known locally as haor, these water bodies turn to safe havens for millions of migratory birds escaping the cold in countries like Siberia. Tanguar haor situated in the district of Sunamganj is known to be the biggest single water body in Asia.

While natural beauty dominates the entire expanse of Bangladesh, thousands of ancient relics hold the truth of its interesting past. Some of these relics are several centuries old and relay the facts about the endeavors of religious preachers, traders and ambitious

rulers from all parts of the world.

Situated in the north western part, Paharpur is well known for being a wonderful Buddhist archeological site. It was the largest monastery south of the Himalayas where Lord Buddha and his disciples are believed to have spent a long time preaching. The excavated historical remains include a grand quadrangular court with 77 rooms and a pyramidal cruciform temple. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

BEING THE WORLD'S SINGLE LARGEST MANGROVE FOREST, THE SUNDARBANS IS A PRIDE FOR THE COUNTRY. LOCATED IN THE SOUTH WESTERN PART OF BANGLADESH, IT IS NOW A HOTSPOT FOR ECO-TOURISM.

Not far from Paharpur, there is another archeological landmark in Mahastangarh. It is known to have been one of the biggest place of worship for Hindus. With imposing semi-circular constructions and hand-carved designs, these temples beside a river offer a spectacular view.

Mammoth Buddhist relics are also found in Mainamati near Comilla along the Dhaka- Chittagong highway. The remains of a large Buddhist monastery with an imposing central shrine, speak of early Buddhist civilization. The Kantajee temple in Dinajpur in northwestern Bangladesh, is another must-see place. The age-old temple is iconic for its delicate handwork on murals.

Bangladesh is often called a land of mosques. It is obvious that with over 80% of its 150 million people being Muslims, there will be innumerable mosques. However, many of the mosques are ancient and reflect the tastes of the early Muslim preachers and rulers. The Shatgombuz mosque in Bagerhat near Khulna is unique with its 60 domes. The Atia mosque in Tangail near Dhaka is still vibrant with its archaic designs.

Still in Dhaka, the Star mosque shows the craze for beautification of holy places, and the huge and magnificent national mosque - Baitul Mukarram - is an imposing architectural beauty. As Bangladesh was at the crossroads of several civilizations and imperial rules, there are also several relics that echo the splendor of the past. The Lalbagh Fort in Dhaka commands a spectacular view. Built in 1678 during the rule of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, it is outstanding and complex with courts, residences,



mosques, minarets, tunnels, gardens and a sprawling courtyard.

Sonargaon, the ancient capital of this land, is not very far from the present capital. It has some old palaces. A folklore museum situated in the area showcases the finest handicraft products made in this country.

Bangladesh has taken some commendable initiatives including the creation of tourist accommodation and amusement facilities. The Government has recognized tourism as an industry and put it on the list of thrust sectors. A new National Tourism Policy was framed in 2010 for the development of sustainable tourism. The policy underlines diversification of tourism products, development of eco-tourism, overseas marketing of tourist attractions and human resource development. The government has also enacted 'Tourism, Protected Areas and Exclusive Tourist Zones'. This is expected to help attract foreign investments in these ETZs.

The government is committed to

extend unflinching cooperation to the private sector for the promotion of the tourism industry. To encourage private entrepreneurs in the tourism sector, the government has taken various initiatives including leasing out some outlets of the national tourism organization to the private sector over the last several years. Foreign investors are also welcome to invest in this sector. The investment may be either in the form of a joint venture or on 100% foreign ownership basis.

In order to encourage private and foreign investment, the government is offering various incentives, such as tax exemptions on royalties, on the interest of foreign loans and on capital gains from the transfer of shares by the investing company.

Other initiatives include avoidance of double taxation in case of foreign investors on the basis of bilateral agreements; exemption of income tax on salaries up to three years for the foreign technicians employed in the approved industries; remittance up to 50% of the salary of the

foreigners employed in Bangladesh and the facilities for repatriation of their savings and retirement benefits and personal assets at the time or their return; facilities for repatriation of invested capital, profits and dividends; guarantee against expropriation and nationalization of foreign private investment (as per Foreign Private Investment Promotion & Protection Act 1980); provision for transfer of shares held by foreigners to local partners with the permission from the Board of Investment.

The government or Bangladesh provides training to educated youths so that these young people can enter the tourism industry. The National Hotel and Tourism Training Institute has provided training to 30,000 students so far in disciplines like - food and beverage production, beverage services, house-keeping and laundry, front office and secretarial services, travel and tour operations apart from a Diploma in Hotel Management and Tourism Management. These trained people are serving in the tourism industry at home and abroad.



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সিনাপুরে বঙ্গবাসরত বাংলাদেশীদের সেবায় গ্রাইম এক্সচেঞ্জ কোং প্রাই লিঃ



আপনার কষ্টক্লান্ত অর্জিত, সহজ ও নিরাপদে
আপনার কাম্বোজ চিকিৎসার সোহে নিতে আমরা প্রাই আপনাকে পাবে

প্রধান শাখা:
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সিংগাপুর ২০২৫৪২
ফোনা: ৬৩২২৪২৬৬, ৬৩২২৪২৬৭
ফ্যাক্স: ৬৩২২৪২৬৮

জুবাই ইন্সট শাখা:
রক ১৩৪, #০১-৩০৫, জুবাই থেটওয়ে
রোড, সিংগাপুর-৬০০১৩৪
ফোনা: ৬৮২২৪৬৪৭, মোবা: ৯৬৪৩২৪৩৮
ফ্যাক্স: ৬৬৬১৭৫৫২

প্রতিদিন দুপুর ১১টা থেকে রাত ১০টা পর্যন্ত খোলা

Apart from these, many private tourism training institutes also provide training and send people abroad bringing in foreign remittance to Bangladesh. The "Exclusive Tourist Zones and Tourism Protected Areas" programme is expected to enhance job opportunities for the local community. However, the tourism industry in Bangladesh still lacks competent human resources.

Also until now, tourism was not seriously considered in most of the poverty reduction strategies. Hence, the government is setting guidelines for community involvement in tourism planning, formulation and development.

Tourism is a well-balanced vehicle to influence poverty and tourism jobs can be very valuable in giving poor people self-esteem. The present government has also laid much emphasis on private sector-led tourism growth in Bangladesh. Also under consideration are projects under the new Public-Private Partnership (PPP) system.

Bangladesh is a land of many wonders. With a rich history, diversified culture and impeccable natural beauty, it deserves to be visited again and again. Along with the



SONARGAON, DHAKA

hospitality of the people, there are all necessary facilities available to make travel across Bangladesh a memorable one. The national tourism organization - Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation - and plenty of private tour operators await to serve you.

As Bangladesh is a young destination in the world tourism map and its attractions are still less trodden, it possesses a great potential to attract tourists from around the world. It is striving hard to develop a planned and controlled tourism industry by maintaining quality and standard of its tourism products and services. Bangladesh is always ready to welcome tourists in this land of virgin lush green and ancient civilization.

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B A N G L A D E S H

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BANGLADESH IS A VIBRANT ECONOMY THAT HAS, DESPITE THE RECENT GLOBAL ECONOMIC MELTDOWN, MAINTAINED A CONSISTENT GROWTH RATE OF AROUND 6%. WITH A POPULATION OF CLOSE TO 150 MILLION, BANGLADESH BOASTS OF AN EFFICIENT AND ENTREPRENEURIAL WORKFORCE THAT IS CHANGING THE PROFILE OF THE ECONOMY. BANGLADESH'S SEAPORTS, HISTORICALLY HAD BEEN 'PORTS OF CALL' OF ANCIENT TRADERS, AND THE HUB OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY CONNECTING THE WEST AND THE FAR EAST.



Today we are witnessing Bangladesh's resurgence as a regional hub. Bangladesh occupies a strategic location as a bridge between South and South-East Asia and beyond. Despite the recent global economic crisis, Bangladesh's undisturbed and consistent growth over the past decade has proved the resilience of its economy. Its favourable investment climate has been lauded by many around the world. As an emerging market, Bangladesh was listed in Goldman Sachs' 'Next 11' and JP Morgan's 'Frontier Five.' Standard and Poor (S & P) as well as Moody's have placed Bangladesh ahead of all countries in South Asia, except India.

WHY BANGLADESH?

Industrious low-cost workforce

Bangladesh offers a well-educated, highly adaptive and industrious workforce with the lowest wages and salaries in the region. 57.3% of the population is under 25, providing a youthful group for recruitment. The country has consistently developed a skilled workforce aiming to cater to the need of investors. English is widely spoken, making communication easy. Thousands of Bangladesh nationals who have wide work experience abroad, add to the national reservoir of skills.

Strong local market and growth

Bangladesh has proved to be an attractive investment location with its approximately 150 million population and consistent economic growth leading to strong and growing domestic demand. Its policy is to establish a strong regional connectivity among its immediate neighbours.

Agreements on connectivity have been reached between India, Nepal and Bhutan, which opens great opportunities in the next door markets as well. Its close proximity to China and India opens the doors to a vast market projected to grow to 3 billion by 2050.

Low cost of energy and land

Energy prices in Bangladesh are the most competitive in the region. Transportation on green compressed natural gas costs less than 20% of the diesel price. Many a multinational companies have already

invested in gas exploration in Bangladesh. The cost of land is also the lowest in the region.

Proven export competitiveness

Bangladesh enjoys quota and tariff-free access to the European Union, Canada, Australia and Japan. It enjoys GSP facilities as a LDC country for export to USA. Annual export growth recently recorded 19.6%, which is a testimony to its export competitiveness.

Competitive incentives

Bangladesh offers the most liberal FDI regime in fiscal and non-fiscal incentives in South Asia, allowing 100% foreign equity with unrestricted exit policy, remittance of royalty and repatriation of profits and income.

Special Economic Zones

Bangladesh has already established various exclusive economic zones to set up industries. The country is also developing its core infrastructure, including roads, highways, surface transport and port facilities. A billion dollar credit has been inked with India recently for infrastructure development including in the communication and transport sectors and facilities at sea ports.

Positive climate

Bangladesh has a largely homogenous society with people living in harmony irrespective of race and religion. A democratic country enjoying broad bi-partisan political support for private



Dhaka EPZ at Savar

BANGLADESH IS A VIBRANT ECONOMY THAT HAS, DESPITE THE RECENT GLOBAL ECONOMIC MELTDOWN, MAINTAINED A CONSISTENT GROWTH RATE OF AROUND 6%.

investment, Bangladesh boasts of political stability and containment of extremism. It offers 100% foreign equity or ownership in industrial investment. Foreign exchange regulations have been relaxed and its currency Taka, has been made convertible.

Repatriation of foreign capital along with profit/dividends has been made easy. There is no restriction on issuing Work Permit to a foreign national. The Board of Investment (BOI) offers one stop service to investors.

Direct supervision of Prime Minister's Office (PMO)

All the major organizations dealing with investment, such as BOI, BEPZA, etc., have been kept under the direct supervision of the Prime Minister in order to ensure timely services, easy processing and one-stop service for investment and to address any problems directly.

Legal protection

An Act of Parliament passed in 1980 guarantees legal protection against nationalization and expropriation. Non-commercial risks of investment are also covered by the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA). Bangladesh is also a party to Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), USA ; International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID); World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). Agreements on avoidance of double taxation have been signed with many countries including Japan, UK, Italy, Canada, Sweden, Malaysia, Singapore and the Republic of Korea. Some more such agreements are being negotiated.

Furthermore, Bangladesh offers some competitive investment incentives :

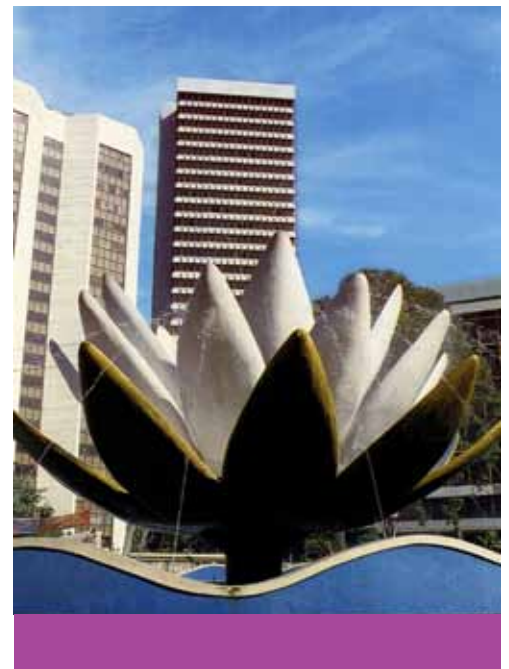
- ♦ Corporate tax holiday (Outside EPZs) : 5 to 7 years for selected sectors;
- ♦ Accelerated depreciation on cost of machinery for new industry in lieu of tax holiday;
- ♦ Reduced Corporate Tax for 5 to 7 years in lieu of tax holidays and accelerated depreciation;
- ♦ Tariff concessions on import of capital machinery, tariff concessions on import of raw materials of the export oriented industries, bonded warehousing facilities, etc.;
- ♦ Cash incentives and export subsidies ranging from 5% to 20 % on the FOB value of selected products;
- ♦ Funds for exports promotion, exports credit guarantee scheme, permission for domestic sales up to 20% by export-oriented companies outside EPZ;
- ♦ Remittance of royalty, technical know-how and technical assistance fees;
- ♦ Citizenship by investing a minimum of US\$ 5,00,000 and permanent resident permits on investing US\$ 75,000.

The special incentives offered to business located in 8 (eight) EPZs include:

- ♦ 10 year tax holiday;
- ♦ Concessionary tax for 5 years, after 10 years;
- ♦ Duty and tax free exports from the EPZ;
- ♦ Readymade factory building;
- ♦ Excellent infrastructure logistics;
- ♦ Duty free import of machinery, raw and construction materials;
- ♦ Business and administrative support services;

It also offers special incentives for investment in the power sector. The power sector is in the forefront of all infrastructure projects.

Special incentives in this sector include 15-year tax holidays; exemption of import duties, value added tax (VAT), surcharges and import permit fees on imports of plants, equipments and spare parts up to ten percent of the original value of total plant and equipment within a period of 12 years of commercial operation. Incentives also include exemption of tax on foreign lending, foreign loan interest, royalties, technical know-how and assistance fees, free repatriation of equity and dividends, etc.



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Shipping Industry in Bangladesh

BANGLADESH HAS A LONG HISTORY OF SHIPBUILDING WITH REGARD TO RIVERINE, COASTAL AND OCEAN-FARING VESSELS. THE LARGE INTERNATIONAL MARKET FOR SMALL OCEAN-FARING VESSELS, THE IMPACT OF LABOUR COST ON SUCH VESSELS AND AN ABUNDANCE OF SKILLED LABOUR AT LOW PRICE HAVE MADE BANGLADESH A COMPETITIVE SHIPBUILDING COUNTRY.



Global shipbuilding is currently dominated by South Korea, which is by far the world's largest shipbuilding nation. In spite of high labour costs, South Korea produced more ships in 2008 than the rest of the world combined. Its preeminence in the industry is largely due to its highly advanced shipbuilding technology, the strong work ethic of the labour force and the high productivity and efficiency of the shipbuilders.

China is a fast emerging shipbuilder that is poised to overtake South Korea in the future, although its current production is limited mainly to low-cost basic vessels. However, military shipbuilding is still dominated by the US and European companies.

Current Status

Major shipbuilding countries such as Korea, China, Japan, and Vietnam have all moved their focus towards building large ocean-faring vessels, for which less intensive labour is required. This, however, has left an opportunity for developing countries like Bangladesh to produce small-sized ocean-faring vessels, not exceeding 25,000 Dead Weight Tonnage (DWT) capacity. Bangladesh, among others is trying to avail this opportunity as it has abundant and low-wage labour. Moreover, it has skilled and semi-skilled workforce in this sector for many decades. Cargo

vessels under inland shipping ordinance began during eighties with sizes from 200 DWT to 500 DWT. Such construction did not require any organized dockyard or shipyard.

These vessels were built on bare land on the riverbanks. They were scattered around the country, especially where electricity was available. Presently, the industries manufacturing row ferries, tug boats, fishing trawlers, inland oil tankers, etc. are catering to local demand.

With the ship-breaking industry flourishing in Chittagong, availability of steel plates boosted the inland shipbuilding in the early nineties and various shipyards started to emerge in this sector. As of today, about 200 locally-built cargo vessels from 500 DWT to 2000 DWT - are now operating, and one thousand vessels with a 1000 passenger-capacity are plying on our inland riverine routes. Moreover, there are about 300 small and large dockyards, generating about 100,000 jobs.

A total of 30 shipbuilding companies have so far been registered with the Board of Investment (BOI). Out of these, 22 are local investment projects, 7 are joint ventures and one is a 100% foreign owned project. The total proposed investment of these projects is around Taka 847 crore. Local investment comes around Taka 720 crore. Excepting a few, most are riverine and coastal cargoes, row ferries, tug boats, fishing trawlers and inland oil tankers.

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Potential ocean-faring vessel builders

■ Khulna Shipyard Ltd (KSY) is located on 68.97 acres (approximately 279,000 m²) of land at Labanchara, Khulna, on the bank of river Qazi Bacha, a branch of the Rupsha. It is about 45 km north from Mongla seaport. The shipyard was founded in 1954 and commissioned in 1957. It was taken over by the Bangladesh Navy in 1999. It has significant capacity for servicing ships and this can be transformed into an ocean faring vessel-building shipyard relatively quickly and with significantly less investment than founding a new shipyard.

■ The Meghna Group recently signed a US\$ 35 million deal with South Korean shipbuilding giant STX to build the country's largest ship-manufacturing facility. The company will have the capacity to build ships up to 25,000 DWT and is situated on 33 acres of land (approximately 133,500 m²) on the Meghna river. The Meghna Group is also contemplating setting up a steel plant that could meet the requirements of the shipbuilding industry.

■ Dockyard & Engineering Works Limited (DEWL) is the country's oldest shipbuilder and is currently run by the Bangladesh Navy. It

has already made a decision to develop its existing infrastructure to international standards to lure export orders from overseas buyers. DEWL is situated on 22 acres (approximately 89,000 m²) of land at Sonakanda in Narayanganj district on the bank of the Sitalakhya river. It currently has facilities for building Ro-Ro ferries, tugboats, inland and coastal vessels. DEWL is planning to install capacity to build ships of up to 8,000 DWT.

■ The Karnaphuli-based Rangs Group is in the process of setting up Desh Shipbuilding at a cost of Tk 100 crore (\$14.5 million) at Sadar Ghat in Chittagong.

■ Meghna Ghat-base Khan Brothers has invested around Tk. 16 crore (\$ 2.3 million) to develop a shipbuilding infrastructure at Gazaria in Munshiganj near the Meghna Bridge outside Dhaka.

■ Bengal Electric has acquired approximately 50 acres (202,000 m²) of land in Munshiganj to start shipbuilding for export. The construction work of the slipway has begun.

Opportunity for smaller ocean-faring shipbuilding

The huge supply gap for smaller ocean-faring ships in the international market has been for different reasons. Some of the major reasons are: (1) decreasing international trade volumes due to the current international economic crises as smaller ships do not require the same operational cost as larger vessels (2) more than half the international fleet of smaller size is more than 20 years old and need to be replaced (3) for better profit, bigger shipbuilders moved from building smaller ocean-faring ships to super-ships, naval-ships, huge containerized ships and so on (4) all the big shipyards in Korea, China, Taiwan, Singapore, and Japan are booked apparently for the next ten years for building super-ships and the owners could not find yards to build the smaller vessels in those countries.

The above factors eventually forced the owners to focus their attention to Bangladesh for smaller ocean-faring ships.

Value addition in the shipbuilding industry in Bangladesh

Value-addition in the shipbuilding industry in Bangladesh is high when compared to other industries. A study has shown that the value added in Ready Made Garment (RMG) industry ranges from 20% to 30%, while shipbuilders estimate that value added in the shipbuilding industry varies between 30% and 40%, depending on how much of the design is done in Bangladesh. Over the long term it is estimated that the value-add could increase to at least 60% if certain raw materials and components are produced in Bangladesh.

Skilled Workforce

The shipbuilding industrial sector requires four different levels of skill. Unskilled labour is required at the bottom end. This is abundantly available at a lower cost. Most of the labour required is at the semi-skilled level, i.e. welders, pipe fitters, ship fitters, painters and so on. Bangladesh has an abundance of semi-skilled labour.

There are about 171 polytechnic institutes in Bangladesh producing thousands of junior engineers and foremen every year. Moreover, many engineers, foremen and technicians return from shipbuilding industries located outside the country to join in local shipbuilding industries. So, there is no shortage of this level of skills at present.

At the top end, the sector requires highly skilled naval engineers, naval architects. The Department of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering under Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology produces naval engineers and naval architects every year. But this is not enough for this growing industry. Recently some Bangladeshis have been trained to the required skill-level in Europe.

Companies like Western Marine recently setup a government accredited training centre while Ananda has its own training facilities. The ship-breaking industry of Bangladesh is also producing huge semi-skilled labour indirectly. At the third level, the sector requires junior engineers, foremen and skilled technicians.

The cost of semi-skilled labour (welders, fitters, painters) in Bangladesh is

approximately 1/3 that of China and 2/3 that of Vietnam according to Germanischer Lloyds. Thus, there is a comparative cost advantage over other countries producing ocean-faring ships.

English is widely spoken in Bangladesh, and 90% of staff especially at managerial and supervisory level, are very fluent.

Entering export market

Cost-effective human resources in comparison to other shipbuilding nations and comparative advantages such as simple importation facility of raw materials, duty free market access for Bangladesh ships to other countries have encouraged local entrepreneurs. Most of them are trying to upgrade their existing facilities to meet international standards. Bangladesh got its first exposure of international shipbuilding in 1979. Japanese shipbuilding giant Mitsui Engineering and the local shipbuilding industry developed the first and the largest joint venture shipyard with High Speed Shipbuilding Engineering Co. Ltd. at Fatullah, Dhaka. They built eight grain carriers under international tenders floated by FAO according to the international classification. It built the first barge-mounted power plant for Rural Power Company, several oil tankers, first moving patrol boat for the Navy and troop carriers for the Bangladesh Army.


In 2005, Ananda Shipyards and Slipways Ltd secured the first order for ocean-faring vessels from a high end market like Denmark by competing with Chinese and Vietnamese shipbuilders. They delivered the first ship in early 2008. Later on, it received a number of



orders, while a second company, Western Marine, has also received a significant number of orders. Ananda Shipyard has successfully completed five export orders to Mozambique and Holland. 24 Multi Purpose Cargo Vessels in the 5500 DWT to 7250 DWT category, are under construction. These vessels will be exported to Germany.

Western Marine exported a floating reception vessel to Finland and another four multi-purpose cargo ships are being exported to Germany. Another 12 vessels under construction are passenger boats and multipurpose cargo vessels intended for Pakistan, Germany and Denmark.

As a result of the growth in international trade volumes, the market for small ocean-faring vessels has grown significantly and is now estimated to be in the region of US\$ 400 billion annually. Even if Bangladesh could achieve one percent market share, exports could touch US\$4 billion annually. Moreover, it is estimated that shipbuilding industry could become the second biggest exporting industry in Bangladesh by 2015.



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Success and Potential of Bangladesh's Export Trade

BANGLADESH'S EXPORT PROMOTION BUREAU (EPB) HAS BEEN WORKING RELENTLESSLY TO ACHIEVE EQUILIBRIUM IN FOREIGN TRADE AND THE COUNTRY'S OVERALL ECONOMIC GROWTH.



This is being done through continuous development and promotion of the export trade in the rapidly changing and competitive global environment. Prominent among its activities are the increase in production of exportable items, product diversification, inclusion of new products in the export basket, policy support in export trade development, collection, preservation and dissemination of trade information, compilation of export data as well as export marketing development.

The export market is expanding rapidly due to the timely initiative of the EPB. Bangladesh's export destinations were limited to 68 countries in 1972-73. However today it has extended to 187 countries. With the robust leadership and strategic planning of the Ministry of Commerce and the EPB, export earnings in 2009-2010 amounted to US\$ 16204.65 million, marking a huge rise since 1972-73. Export growth registered around 40% during July-January period of 2010-2011. The EPB is playing a big role in product diversification and development. Exportable products in 1972-73 numbered 25, has increased to 168 today. Almost 80% of export earnings come from readymade garments alone.

As an initiative of export diversification, and considering the export potential and production capacity, eight products have been given high priority. They are agro-products and agro-processing products, light engineering products (including auto-parts and bicycles), footwear and leather products, pharmaceutical products, software and ICT products, home textile, the sea-bound ship building Industries and toiletries products.

Another 12 have been identified as special development sectors. They are crushed and finished leather production, frozen fish

production and processing, handicrafts products, electric and electronic products, fresh flower and foliage, jute and jute products, hand-woven textiles from hill areas (pahari tant bostro), uncut diamond, herbal plants, medicine and medicinal products, ceramic products and melamine, plastic products and furniture industries.

A report on "Export of Ship from Bangladesh: Problems and Prospects" was prepared to develop the ship building sector. To implement its recommendations, a standing committee headed by the Vice-Chairman of EPB has already prepared a strategic plan by reviewing the advantages offered to this sector. It is worth mentioning that during 2009-2010, ship exports to the European Union (EU) and Mozambique amounted to US \$ 25.29 million.

Considering the potential of the furniture sector in the world market, a document was prepared and a national work plan formulated. The EPB has undertaken an initiative to conduct export promotional activities at the village level under the One District One Product (ODOP) program. 14 products from 41 districts have been identified as part of the product development. Several preliminary steps have also been taken to develop agar wood & ator, clay tally and rubber under this program.

According to the World Trade Organization (WTO), most countries neighbouring Bangladesh experienced negative export growth trends in 2009-2010. [India (-2.81%), Bhutan (-5%), Pakistan (-13.44%), Sri-Lanka (-13.14%), Maldives (-38.89%), Indonesia (-14.97%), Malaysia (-20.95%) and Thailand (-13.25%)] But due to the dynamic and efficient leadership of the present Government, Bangladesh saw positive export growth during this period despite the global economic meltdown.

The export target for 2010-2011 is fixed at US\$ 18,500.00 million. In the July-December period alone, export earnings touched US\$ 10263.64 million, 41% more than the same period last year.

The idea of holding the Dhaka International Trade Fair (DITF) originated with a view to give local entrepreneurs the opportunity to see the work of their counterparts abroad. 531 companies, both local and foreign, participated in the DITF-2011, which brought export orders worth US\$3.5 million. The Ministry of Commerce, along with the EPB, have been jointly organizing the DITF since 1995.

With a view to facilitate direct contact between suppliers and exhibitors the "Bangladesh-China Friendship Exhibition Centre" project has been taken up with financial support from the Chinese Government. The project was approved by the ECNEC and plans are on to acquire an alternative site for the project. To accelerate export promotional activities from EPB's own building, a National Export House is being planned.

During 2009-2010, EPB participated in as many as 27 International Trade Fairs and organized three Single Country Trade Exhibitions resulting in export orders worth US\$ 352.26 million. Moreover, as a part of the export market expansion activities, trade delegations will visit Russia, Ukraine, West Africa and Brazil.

In recognition to the contribution in the export trade arena, an export trophy and Commercially Important Person (CIP) cards are awarded every year. Seventy five companies under 25 product categories are awarded gold, silver and bronze trophies each year. That apart, 125 outstanding businessmen and 40 individual (as ex-officio exporters) are declared as CIPs.

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* কৃষি ও পল্লী ঋণ * কৃষি ভিত্তিক শিল্প ঋণ * শিল্প ঋণ * সিভিকিট ফাইন্যান্স * আমদানী ও রপ্তানী ঋণ * চলতি মূলধন ঋণ * চাকুরীর জন্য বিদেশ গমনেচ্ছুকদের ঋণ কর্মসূচী * ভোগ্যপণ্য ঋণ * গৃহনির্মাণ ঋণ * এসএমই ও মাইক্রো ক্রেডিট * মহিলাদের জন্য ঋণ কর্মসূচী * প্রতিবন্ধীদের জন্য ঋণ কর্মসূচী * স্বনির্ভর ঋণ কর্মসূচী

৩। অন্যান্য সেবা :

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৪। ভবিষ্যত কার্যক্রম :

* ইসলামী শরীয়াহ ভিত্তিক ব্যাংকিং সেবা * মিউচুয়াল ফান্ড (প্রবাসীদের জন্য বিশেষ সংরক্ষিত কোটা) * অন-লাইনে সকল প্রকার সেবামূলক লেনদেন

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Trade and Business: Attracting Investors from Singapore

BY GURDIP SINGH

THE 2011 BANGLADESH BUSINESS SEMINAR GAVE IN-DEPTH BUSINESS PROSPECTS TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, INVITING THEM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE COUNTRY'S MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

Held on 3 March 2011 at the Little Red Dot Seminar Room of the International Enterprise Singapore, the seminar was organized by the High Commission of Bangladesh, and supported by IE Singapore as well as the Singapore Business Federation.

The Seminar was addressed, among others, by IE Singapore Deputy Chief Executive Officer Mr. Chua Taik Him, Mr. Vivek Chhabra, Vice Chairman South Asia Business Group of the Singapore Business Federation, His Excellency Mr. Kamrul Ahsan, the High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Singapore, Mr. Md. Ghulam Hussain, Secretary of Ministry of Commerce, Bangladesh.

Mr. Md. Ghulam Hossain, Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, in his keynote speech gave an economic overview of Bangladesh. "The country is on track to support an 8 per cent annual Gross Domestic Product growth by 2013. The private sector will be the main engine of growth for the country's industrialization plans. The long-term target is to achieve an economic growth of 10 per cent by 2017, with the aim of sustaining it through to 2021. "Exports will drive the country's economic growth," he said.

Mr. Md. Ghulam Hossain pointed out that Bangladesh has had strong trade growths with US\$22.6 billion imports and US\$16.2 billion exports in 2009. The resource-rich Bangladesh is the next main consumer market in Asia, with a young population of 75 million out of the total population of 150 million. He stressed that Foreign Direct Investment is set to increase, given the large number of mega projects in the pipeline. "Investment opportunities in the country are set to multiply manifold. Bangladesh's Foreign Private Investment

Act 1980 protects FDI and avoidance of double taxation treaty signed with 18 countries including Singapore," said the Secretary.

Addressing the annual Seminar, His Excellency Mr. Kamrul Ahsan gave an update on Bangladesh's national plans, highlighting that the government has given top most priority in infrastructure building that will provide the country a solid platform for growth of manufacturing sector and promotion of trade and investment.

"Considering the growing energy needs, the government has undertaken immediate, medium and long-term programmes to meet the electricity demand in the country. All measures are taken to add 7000-megawatt of electricity to the national grid within next three years," Mr Kamrul Ahsan said.

"Proposals for adding another 12,000-MW in the next five years are also in the planning process," he added.

The High Commissioner also highlighted Bangladesh's export performance, saying it grew by 36 per cent year-on-year in the first half of the 2010-2011 financial year. He told Singapore entrepreneurs that Bangladesh attached great importance to promote business relations with ASEAN region where Singapore always plays an import role. "Singapore's investment to Bangladesh now stands close to half a billion US dollars," he said.

"Bilateral economic cooperation will continue to bring mutual benefits to both sides. We firmly believe that there is



ample scope for Singaporean businessmen to explore business opportunities in Bangladesh," stressed Mr Kamrul Ahsan.

DCCI President Mr Asif Ibrahim further elaborated on business opportunities in Bangladesh for the private sector and options for Public-Private Partnership.

The future of Information Communication and Technology and outsourcing in Bangladesh was presented by Mr. Mahboob Zaman, President of the Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services.

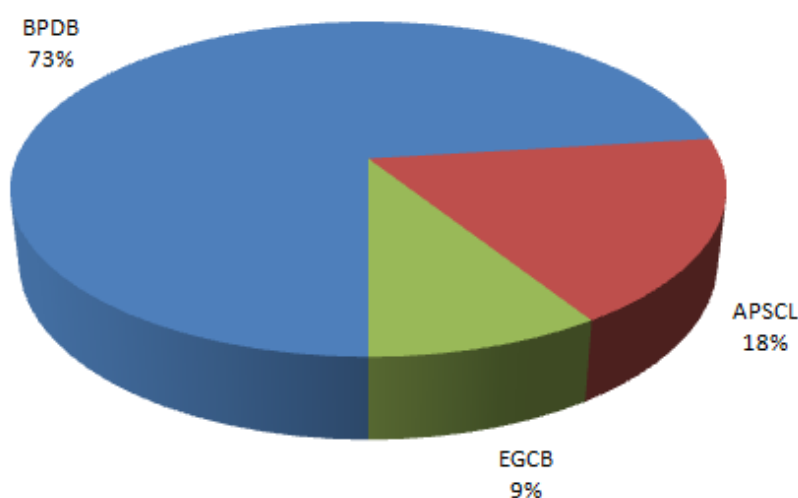
The country's monetary policy was explained by Mr. Md. Ahsanullah, who also assured of the central bank's support to international businesses venturing into the rapidly expanding Bangladesh economy. The experience of working in Bangladesh was shared by Michael Lim, Business Development Director, International Marketing, South Asia at ST Electronics (Info-Software Systems). ST Electronics is one of main Singapore investors in Bangladesh.

The seminar was well attended by Singapore businessmen seeking new markets in Bangladesh. A lively Q&A session between Bangladesh officials and Singapore businessmen networking followed.

OPPORTUNITIES IN THE POWER SECTOR

POWER FOR ALL BY 2020-2021 – THAT IS WHAT THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT IS TARGETING. PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HASINA'S GOVERNMENT HAS UNDERTAKEN A PROGRAMME TO PRODUCE AN ADDITIONAL 20,000 MEGAWATT ELECTRICITY TO MEET THE COUNTRY'S POWER REQUIREMENTS.

Electricity production (public), 2010, by %



The government has given top priority to development of the sector considering its importance in the overall development of the country. Adequate and reliable supply of electricity is an important pre-requisite for attracting both domestic and foreign investment.

As per the Power and Energy Development Roadmap (2010-2021), government expects to meet the desired need (20,000 MW by the year 2021) through the increment of 10% production per year towards reaching the per capita consumption to 600 KW. The government's vision is to provide electricity to most of the population at a reasonable price and to achieve overall socio-economic development of the country.

The Power and Energy Sector Development Roadmap plans to produce 8,500 MW by 2013, 11,500 MW by 2015 and 20,000 MW by 2021. However, to ensure overall and balanced development of this sector, government has taken steps for an immediate plan, a short-term plan,

a medium-term plan (2012-2015) and a long-term development plan (2016-2021).

The plans have been developed based on a techno-economic analysis and a least-cost option. These plans include balanced development in generation, transmission and the distribution system to achieve a desired level of reliability of supply.

As the power sector is a capital-intensive industry, huge investments are required in order to generate addition to the capacity. Competing demands on the government resources and declining levels of external assistance from multilateral and bilateral donor agencies constrained the potential for public investment in the power sector.

Recognizing these trends, the government amended its industrial policies to enable private investment in the power sector. Both the public and private sector will be investing in the power sector in Bangladesh. The government is investing Tk 9611.6 crore for the next Five-year Plan to meet the power and energy needs in the country, according to the General

Economics Division (GED) of the Ministry of Planning.

Work is underway to set up quick rental power stations that can produce 1,000-1,200 MW and another 432 MW from the private sector.

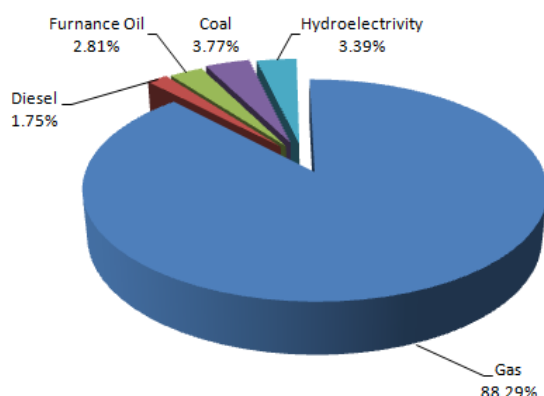
The Power Cell, created under the Power Division of Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, received the mandate to lead private power development. The government is strongly committed to attract private investment for installing new power generation capacity on a build-own-operate basis.

35 additional power plants are being planned with a capacity of 3,158 megawatts – five of them with the capacity of 410 MW have already gone into commercial operation. The remaining are under construction. Apart from this, approvals are in place for four power plants with 1,234 MW and a quick rental power plant with capacity of 53 MW in the IPP sector.

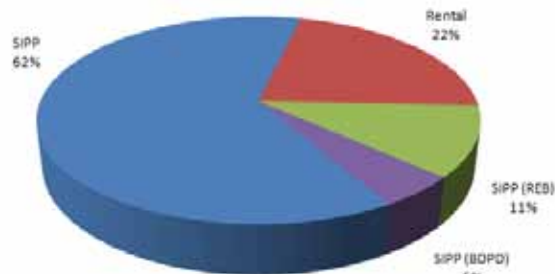
Honourable Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina told the Jatiya Shangshad (National Parliament) that in the last two years her government added 1131 MW electricity to the national grid. The Honourable Prime Minister also outlined various programmes of her government to set up a nuclear power plant and to use renewable energy for power generation. The power shortage had prompted the government to enter into contractual agreements for high cost temporary solutions such as rental power and small IPPs on a temporary basis.

Under the sixth Five-year Plan, the production capacity will be enhanced to 9426 megawatt (MW) by 2015, while the present generation is 4020 MW. According

Electricity production (private), 2010, by %



Raw material used to produce electricity, 2010, by %



Charts Source: Power and Energy Sector Development Roadmap (June 2010), Ministry of Finance

to the planning commission, the government has taken initiatives to produce 792 MW by 2010, 920 MW by 2011, 2269 MW by 2012, 1675 MW by 2013, 1170 MW by 2014 and 2600 MW by 2015.

Currently, the country is almost totally dependent on natural gas fired generation (88 per cent of power comes from gas-fired generators). The sixth five-year plan will put special emphasis on hydro-power, gas, coal and solar energy and proper pricing of primary energy will be facilitated based on the review of production cost. The per capita consumption of energy in Bangladesh is on average 160 kilogram oil equivalent (kgoe), while it is 530 kgoe in India, 510 kgoe in Pakistan, 340 kgoe in Nepal and 470 kgoe in Sri Lanka and such consumption in Asia is 640 kgoe. 47 per cent of the total population in Bangladesh have access to electricity and some 53,281 villages have been brought under electricity coverage.

Bangladesh and Russia have struck an agreement to install the country's first nuclear power plant to generate around 2,000 megawatts of electricity at Rooppur in Pabna. Two modern reactors having the generation capacity of 1,000 MW each, will be part of the deal. Russia's Rosatom company will supply necessary fuel for the reactors during its life-term and take back spent fuel. Russia will also manage nuclear waste and help decommissioning of the nuclear power plant in future.

Russia is set to offer a funding mechanism to build the nuclear power plant under the agreement. Science and ICT Ministry of Bangladesh will act as the Competent Authority of the government, while Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission will act as the customer of the plant project.

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AND OTHER SECTORS

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND ACROSS BANGLADESH'S ECONOMY. A NUMBER OF SECTORS ARE HAVING PARTICULARLY HIGH GROWTH AND INVESTMENT POTENTIAL. THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO ANNOUNCED ATTRACTIVE SCHEMES WELCOMING INVESTORS INTO VARIOUS SECTORS. HERE ARE THE SECTORS WITH OPPORTUNITIES.

ICT & Business Services

Bangladesh's huge strides in the Information, Communication and Technology arena is reflected in the exponential rise in the use of mobile telephones and the internet. The government is using ICT in various areas to improve service delivery to citizens and businesses, thereby increasing efficiency, improving transparency and good governance. A proactive government, a large pool of young, skilled IT manpower, and a vibrant industry environment makes Bangladesh's ICT sector very attractive.

Currently there are several companies in the private sector involved in the outsourcing of specific sets of skills. As outsourcing costs rise in traditional markets, companies are looking at diversifying their sourcing pool, among the forefront of which is Bangladesh.

To unleash its full potential, the present government is providing the sector with tax exemptions, setting up industry focused funds and software parks and above-all, a roadmap setting up the path to a "Digital Bangladesh" by 2021.



NTT Data, Nordisk, FOSS, Nokia, Panasonic, Motorola are some of the beneficiaries that have emerged from Bangladesh's ICT environment. Most of these are solution providers in technology, financial services, network infrastructure building – all competitive, international quality software. One of the companies – Leads Corporation – is the largest software development and IT services company in Bangladesh. It is now recognised as the symbol of the ICT's productive atmosphere that has been created by the government and the industry.

Joint ventures with top names in the ICT industry overseas has resulted in some of the outstanding solutions, giving Bangladesh a name and an edge in the international market. Dell, NCR, TCS and Verifone are some of the names that have entered into partnerships or joint ventures with companies in Bangladesh.

Electronics

Consumer goods produced at competitive prices in Bangladesh are a big draw for foreign manufacturers. European and Asian electronic firms have established collaborations with counterparts in Bangladesh. The government has adopted a policy that encourages investment through various schemes including joint ventures. The high skill levels and low cost of labour in this sector offers companies great returns on their investment. Government focus is to promote manufacturing of semiconductors, cell phone inputs and home appliances. The idea is to develop capacity and skill in the manufacture and assembly of a wide range of electronic components, especially the upstream higher value-added items.

Light Engineering

Businessmen from countries like China, the United States, Japan and South Korea are tapping into Bangladesh's cheap and easily trainable labour. The rapidly growing domestic market with the attraction of cost reductions, makes light industries in Bangladesh a compelling choice for investors. Although labour intensive, there are close to 40,000 small scale light engineering plants producing a diverse range of products from toys to high-end machinery spares.

These industries are much in demand as the market for engineering and electronic goods expands. Realising the importance of the light engineering industry in Bangladesh's economy, the government has declared it as a thrust area in its industrial policy. Plans are also afoot to set up a light engineering industrial park.



Pharmaceuticals

The life sciences industry in Bangladesh is witnessing robust growth, thanks in part to the growing health awareness, purchasing power of the people, and also the relaxation of the trade related intellectual property rights. Some of the leading global names are among the nearly 230 manufacturers in the \$700 million industry which continues to expand with their new and improved product list.

There has been fresh investment in recent years. Overall, Bangladesh is becoming one of the fastest growing pharmaceutical exporting countries. Several domestic companies are now gearing up to enter the highly regulated markets in Europe and the United States.





Ceramics

With its high quality to cost ratios and creative human resource base, Bangladesh is perfectly positioned to expand rapidly in the ceramic sector. Currently a few ceramic tableware manufacturers dominate the industry producing high quality products for international brands. The latest technological advancements in ceramics with transfer of technology from Japan are also being utilised in Bangladesh to produce high quality bone china.

Bangladesh's ceramic tableware has built up a good reputation in the international markets like North America and EU countries. Thus Bangladesh is well positioned to compete in the global ceramics industry which is estimated to be worth in excess of \$10bn. The global ceramic tableware industry is currently going through a phase of acquisition and consolidation.

However, Bangladesh has the advantage of its technical expertise and skilled manpower, clean gas reserves in certain locations to fire kilns for competitive cost gains.



Leather & Leather Goods

Bangladesh's leather product export earnings are forging ahead due to the growing international demand for leather products, mainly for quality and cheaper prices. According to the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), earnings of leather exports from Bangladesh rose almost 30% to US \$149.46 million, in the last seven months of the fiscal 2010-11, as against \$115.02 million in the corresponding period of the previous year. Tanners and leather product producers are witnessing higher demand for their finished leather and leather goods in the international market.

Bangladesh has a long established tanning industry which produces nearly 3% of the world's leather products. An attractive location to source and outsource for leather products, the industry is ideally suited to Bangladesh with its availability of good quality raw materials and cheap and abundant labour.

Government support for the industry comes in the form of tax holidays, duty free imports of raw materials and machinery for export-oriented leather market, and other export incentives.

A separate Leather Zone has been proposed along with relocating the existing industry sites to a well-organised environment. New FDI inflow is highly encouraged and foreign investors are welcome to capitalise on the opportunity.



Garment & Textile

Readymade garments and knitwear exports-from spinning to weaving, from knitwear to leisurewear and high street fashions, the textiles and clothing industry is Bangladesh's biggest export oriented industry. Factories design and produce for the world's leading brands and retailers. This rapidly growing sector offers a unique competitive edge that supports profitable expansion into new strategic markets.

Bangladesh is today, the third largest supplier of garment products, after China and Turkey. The country registered a hike in its apparel exports, with increased exports to India and new markets wrested from global leader China. The annual export target for fiscal 2010-11 has been set at \$18.5 billion.

Bangladesh has new destinations such as Japan, South Africa, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and some Latin American countries. Exports are set to rise, as manufacturers have already bagged bigger orders than before. Bangladesh exported knitwear worth \$5.07 billion during the July-January period of the current fiscal year, registering 43.22 percent growth compared with the same period a year ago. In the seven-month period, the country exported woven garments worth \$4.38 billion, a 39.09 percent rise.

Bilateral agreements with 28 countries and the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) of the EU are key reasons for Bangladesh ready made garment(RMG) products having access to global markets. The current cycle of GSP applies from 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2011. Bangladesh is now a significant RMG supplier to North America and Europe. Bangladesh is also in a better position in the USA market through competition. Recently Canada has also provided tariff-free access for all the items from Bangladesh. Enormous investment opportunities exist in this sector.

Additionally the government has created a highly favourable policy framework for investment offering investors several choices. The most beneficial public policy of introducing back to back LC and bonded warehouse facilities provide a tremendous impetus to the export scenario in Bangladesh.



Agribusiness

Primarily an agrarian economy, this sector's output is the largest to the overall Bangladesh economy. It comprises about 30% of the country's GDP and employs around 60% of the total labour force. The performance of this sector has an overwhelming impact on major macroeconomic objectives like employment generation, poverty alleviation, human resources development and food security.

Rice, Jute, Sugarcane, Potato, Pulses, Wheat, Tea and Tobacco are the principal crops. Meeting the nation's food requirements remains the key-objective of the government and in recent years there has been

substantial increase in grain production. Thriving in this sector are canned juices, fruits, vegetables, dairy and poultry. An abundance of natural resources support a range of highly profitable investment opportunities in agribusiness. Blessed with a tropical climate, it has the essential attributes for successful agri-based industries and therefore a wide variety of investment opportunities.

The government encourages development of the agricultural sector through measures to increase crop sector productivity and production of non-crop agriculture. To achieve this it provides increased credit, and facilitates greater access to inputs and modern technology. Investments in agribusiness industries in Bangladesh are encouraged with several support measures.

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Cricket World Cup: Making an Impact

THE CRICKET WORLD CUP IS ON. BANGLADESH IS A CO-HOST, ALONG WITH INDIA AND SRI LANKA, FOR THE SHOWPIECE EVENT FROM FEBRUARY 19 TO APRIL 2. AND IT IS THE BIGGEST SPORTING EVENT BANGLADESH HAS HOSTED SINCE ITS INDEPENDENCE IN 1971!!



It is party time in Bangladesh. The streets of Dhaka are jammed as tens of thousands of cricket fans are partying, soaking in the atmosphere on foot and in open vans, dancing, waving flags and blowing locally-made vuvuzelas.

The opening ceremony, a \$30 million extravaganza was jointly organised by the International Cricket Council (ICC) and Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB). It opened with the national anthem “Amar Shonar Bangla” (My Golden Bangladesh) and was followed by local artistes Tapu, Rinku, Mahadi and later the ever-popular Runa Laila! Stumpy, the World Cup mascot was brought into the stadium in a decorated cycle-rickshaw – after whom came the captains of the 14 teams. Last to come in was Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan, and the stadium went wild cheering him.

There were speeches by Bangladesh Cricket Board President and Sports Minister. ICC President also addressed the crowd after which the Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina declared the tournament open.

In her speech the Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told the full house, “We feel greatly privileged to co-host the cricket extravaganza in our beautiful country.”... “I congratulate my cricket-loving countrymen for their great enthusiasm and cooperation to make this event a grand success,” she said.

“Good luck to the players and I hope that fraternity among the nations will further be strengthened through this World Cup.”

The highlight of the spectacular opening event was an aerial cricket game played by flying acrobats and a laser-beamed ball. The two hour extravaganza in the full house stadium included a host of singers and dancers. Among them were Grammy award-winning Canadian singer Bryan Adams – who belted out favourite hits like “Summer of 69” and “Let’s make it a night to remember”. The crowd also enjoyed the tournament theme song “De Ghumake”, composed by the Indian trio

Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy. There was a dash of colour as mostly Bangladeshi dances were performed by children and youngsters.

To top it all was the innovative show when a person aimed a bow towards the sky and released the arrow, and lo and behold it turned into sparkling fireworks!!!

Indeed it was a historic occasion. The country needs to show the world that it is capable of being a perfect host on an occasion like this. They are out to make a mark on visitors from different countries coming here. As far as cricket itself is concerned, the clean chit given by ICC to



Cricket World Cup Opening Ceremony



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the venues is an indication of the capability of standards at par with World Cup requirements.

"This is a tournament that matters a lot to the people of this country, they have never experienced anything like this," the ICC media officer has been quoted as saying so. Senior officials know it is the best chance to improve the nation's image.

The capital Dhaka and the port city of Chittagong are the two venues in Bangladesh, which is hosting eight games - six Group B matches and two quarter-finals - out of a total of 49 games. Bangladesh is playing all their league matches at home.

In fact, cricket is everywhere in Bangladesh. Huge replicas of cricket bats, balls and players can be seen at important road intersections. City authorities have renovated the streets, painted the road sides and footpaths and residents have festooned their homes and neighbourhoods with cricket-themed decorations. Several venues and important roads have been specially illuminated at night to add to the carnival atmosphere.

Dhaka's Sher-e-Bangla stadium has been refurbished with a modern 25,000-seater facility in suburban Mirpur. The Sher-e-Bangla stadium will also host two quarter-finals. If Bangladesh qualify, they will play at home unless they are drawn against Sri Lanka, in which case the match will be held in Colombo.

THIS ATTEMPT TO HOST CRICKET'S BIGGEST EVENT IS NOT JUST ABOUT SPORT -- IT DEFINITELY SENDS POSITIVE SIGNALS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE COUNTRY AND ITS ARRIVAL ON THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA.

Cricket gained popularity in Bangladesh especially after the country became an Associate member of the International Cricket Council in 1976. They took part in the inaugural ICC Trophy in 1979, reached the semi-finals in 1982 and 1990. In 1997, they won the Trophy, which boosted their claims for Test status - which eventually happened in 2001!

Now by holding the World Cup in Bangladesh, they can earn the appreciation and recognition as capable hosts. It also goes to show that Bangladesh is a safe place to hold an international event of this magnitude.


So the cities of Dhaka and Chittagong will be in the limelight during the World Cup. It is an opportunity to make a favourable perception of Bangladesh to the international community. Hotels are expected to put out the best of their

hospitality to foreign guests. The visitors must be exposed to the highly enjoyable tourism prospects in Bangladesh as well.

This attempt to host cricket's biggest event is not just about sport -- it definitely sends positive signals about the future of the country and its arrival on the international arena.

The Bangladesh government is doing its best to ensure the party is not ruined. Schools will remain closed on match days in Dhaka and Chittagong. In order to save power and ensure fans get to watch matches uninterrupted on television, factories will suspend operations every evening till the end of the tournament.

Now, if only the home team wins, the celebrations in Bangladesh could get even bigger!!!






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Preserving | The Sundarbans

BY M MONWAR HOSSAIN
COUNSELLOR

BANGLADESH HIGH COMMISSION, SINGAPORE

GLOBALIZATION HAS IMPACTED OUR LIVES IN MANY WAYS. AS IN OTHER SPHERES OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUES, GLOBALIZATION PRESENTS CHALLENGES TO ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT TOO, WHICH IS A GROWING CONCERN FOR THE CONSERVATION COMMUNITY, BOTH LOCALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY.

Sustainable growth and development have been buzzwords in the developmental paradigm for quite some time. The recent global negotiations on climate change has paramount importance in fighting the environmental challenges as global leaders are trying to reach a consensus on this issue. Conservation of nature is therefore a global imperative for future growth and development.

Underlining that climate change will constitute one of the major challenges of the 21st century, UNESCO Director General Koichi Matsuura in one of the reports has called for "an integrated approach to issues of environmental preservation and sustainable development".

The Sundarbans

Of the total area of Bangladesh, forest lands account for almost 17%. The total forestland includes among others, the Sundarbans. The Sundarbans (meaning 'beautiful forest' in Bengali), the largest single area of tidal mangrove forest in the world, lies in the natural delta of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers. The Sundarbans account for 41% of total forest revenue earnings of Bangladesh.

Although it is shared by both India and Bangladesh, 60% of its total 10,000 sq km area is in Bangladesh. In 1997, UNESCO listed the Bangladesh part of the mangrove forest as 'The Sundarbans'. The huge area is intersected by a network of numerous

branches and tributaries of rivers creating muddy lands, and interspersed by small islands of salt tolerant mangrove forests. Studies reveal that the Sundarbans is home to 35 mammal, 270 bird, 400 fish and 35 reptile species. The forest is well known for famous majestic Royal Bengal Tiger, as well as numerous flora and fauna including species of local and migratory birds, spotted deer, crocodiles and snakes.

Among those threatened species, the estuarine crocodile, python and the iconic Bengal tiger are of concern for nature lovers and scientists. A total of 334 plant species were also recorded.

Besides providing habitats for wildlife and trees, these mangrove forests regulate the

flow of water after the seasonal rains and protect the soil underneath from erosion. The survival of these forests is, therefore, critical to the welfare of millions of people who depend on them.

The Sundarbans is also a treasure trove of biological diversity. They harbour millions of species of plants, insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. The forest also serves as a protective barrier for the millions of inhabitants against tidal surge during cyclonic storms which are not very infrequent here.

However, the area of the Sundarbans is declining at an alarming rate due to the ever changing salinity of water, soil texture, tidal actions, as well as ecological factors arising out of increasing biotic pressure. This has created a wide range of ecological and socio-economic problems in the region, leading to crisis in the livelihoods of the poor and marginalized people.

Climate change and human interference may destroy much of Sundarbans in India and Bangladesh as well as 25 other World Heritage sites, says a recent UNESCO report. It warned that a 45 cm rise in global sea levels would lead to the destruction of 75 percent of the Sundarbans mangroves.

Jointly, the sea level rise and lower freshwater flow in winter result in increased salinity in the area, threatening the conservation of the Sundarbans mangroves. It is estimated that between 5 and 10 million people who live along the coastal belt and the fringe areas of the Sundarbans depend on the forest resources for their livelihoods.

Since, the Sundarbans had featured in the new 7 wonders final list for the best natural wonders of the world, the demand for escalating conservation measures was increased.

Initiatives taken to preserve the Sundarbans

The Bangladesh government has taken initiatives to join hands with local communities and NGOs in protecting

and conserving natural resources and biodiversity of the Sundarbans. Three wildlife sanctuaries were established in 1977 under the Bangladesh Wildlife (Preservation) (Amendment) Act, 1974.

The Bangladesh Tiger Action Plan (BTAP) marks the beginning of a structured approach to achieving long-term conservation of tigers in Bangladesh. The vision is to ensure protected tiger landscapes in Bangladesh with the main goal to stabilize or increase the tiger population in the Sundarbans.

At the regional level, Bangladesh has established, jointly with India, a bio-village, to preserve its diversity. The initiative focuses on undertaking a sustainable project to ensure the survival of tigers through institutional technical assistance.

Bangladesh, meanwhile has signed, along with fellow SAARC nations, a SAARC Convention on Environment and Cooperation. It has plans to set up an eco-park, ensure reserve forest management and restoration of communication systems involving people in the area. The government has already banned construction in the Sundarbans area and taken up plans for dredging of canals and rivers.

The Government of Bangladesh, locally and through its embassies abroad, has solicited support of all expatriate Bangladeshis and friends of Bangladesh to vote for the Sundarbans (www.new7wonders.com) to make it one of the 7 natural wonders.

The International community has also come forward to its rescue. In 2008, Environmental and Livelihood Security project, (SEALS), with Euro 7.5 million, and the Integrated Protected Area Co-management project (IPAC), with a USAID project grant of \$15.5 million jointly initiated a project. The five-year projects includes the creation of various alternate income generation opportunities for people living in and around the Sundarbans.

Recommendations to promote further conservancy measures

The degradation of the Sundarbans has not yet reached alarming levels. However, to combat further loss, continuous monitoring, policy change and management interventions must be triggered for mangrove restoration.

Priority should be given to invest more resources in environmental education and awareness. The public education, social networks, and media campaigns could be used better to 'sell' biodiversity. The integration of biodiversity concerns into development planning and projects at all levels and in all economic sectors would be a cost-effective strategy for supporting conservation.

Sunderbans reveals the extreme consequences of climate change and global warming, therefore mangrove plantation is the ultimate solution to this problem. When forests are conserved for carbon storage, benefits can flow to the ecosystem service provision, provide biodiversity and opportunities for local communities. Though the economic and social benefit arising from this mangrove rehabilitation would be more meaningful to the local communities of this region, it also acts as an eye opener to the whole world to understand the concept of forest conservation in mitigating climate change. We must save the existing mangrove forests for the well being of our future generations.



*Our Warm Wishes
to
Bangladesh*

*For
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FAIRS & FESTIVALS: KEEPING CULTURE ALIVE

BY ALI HAMID KHAN

FOLK FAIRS AND FESTIVALS ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF BANGLADESH, A COUNTRY WHERE THERE IS A CONSTANT FUSION OF CULTURES. AND WHENEVER THERE IS AN OCCASION CONNECTED WITH TRADITION AND CULTURE, COLOURFUL PROGRAMMES ARE ARRANGED TO CELEBRATE.

Since time immemorial, fairs and festivals have developed and have become more appealing and exciting. Kings, rulers, scholars and common people have all played constructive roles to make fairs more riveting and worthwhile. In today's world, fairs are continuously absorbing new and interesting elements, enhancing its beauty and charm.

Folk fairs depict our culture and traditions, and are windows to the history of the country. These are opportunities to get acquainted with history and to know the people of the land. This is an effective way to build a bridge between the present and the past, especially in updating the younger generation about the past.

Among Muslims, there are the festivals of Eid ul Fitr and Eid Ul Azha that come every year according to the lunar calendar. Fairs are organised during this time and people of all ages take part in them. Muharram or the "sacred month" is the first month of Islamic Hijri calendar. Fairs during these festivals are a good time to learn about Islamic history.

The biggest religious festival for the Hindu community in Bangladesh is the Durga Puja. There are also two other religious communities – Christians and Buddhists – who also have their own festivals.

Fairs are a kaleidoscope of colours, cuisines, lifestyles, traditions, artefacts and workmanship. They play an important role on the psyche and give people a sense of security and unity and makes one proud of their culture and heritage.

There are festivals like the "boi mela", where publishers, writers, institutions and other organisations set up stalls and display new publications. Book lovers, out to quench their thirst for knowledge, throng this fair that goes on for several weeks.

On February 21st every year, there is a flurry of activity across Bangladesh as the country celebrates "Amar Ekushey". It reminds people of the valiant sacrifice by sons of the soil, that established Bangla as the state language.

Then there is Lalon Shah's birthday, when folk singers (bauls) perform the philosopher poet's songs under a banyan tree or on the banks of a river. Fairs are held where items like rural musical instruments, handicrafts, pottery and household items can be found. In open places jattras or plays are held on colourful stages with audiences around it. There is music and actors come and go in quick

succession delivering dialogues and making exaggerated gestures. This is popular even in urban areas and are an integral part of Bangladesh's history and culture.

Fairs and festivals are held throughout the year with zeal and enthusiasm. These have originated from religious, agricultural, social and family practices and beliefs, and they entertain and educate the people. Like for instance the practices to invoke rain or a rich harvest or to even drive away evil. We are not certain when these originated, but some claim it could be more than 3000 years ago.

Bangladesh has always welcomed people from other lands and these people have either left their marks on the local culture or assimilated with them. This constant contact and exchange has helped in the evolution and development of new social structure.



Traditional Baishakhi Fair on the occasion of Bangla New Year's Day



High Commissioner HE Kamrul Ahsan receives the Guest of Honour HE Yu-foo Yee Shoon, Minister of State, at National Day Reception on 26 March 2010



High Commissioner receives MPs Dr. Ahmed Mohammed Magad and Mr. Lim Biow Chuan at National Day Reception on 26 March 2010



Guests at the National Day Reception on 26 March 2010



Cake cutting ceremony at the National Day Reception on 26 March 2010



High Commission family at National Day Reception on 26 March 2010



High Commissioner HE Kamrul Ahsan addresses Bangla New Year's gathering at Jurong Singapore on 4 April 2010



Expatriates enjoying the Bangla New Year's programme at Jurong on 4 April 2010



HE Shahara Khatun, Hon'ble Home Minister, addresses the Bangla New Year's function at the High Commissioner's residence on 14 April 2010



HE Shahara Khatun, Hon'ble Home Minister, with High Commission officials at the Bangla New Year celebration on 14 April 2010



HE Abul Kalam Azad, Hon'ble Minister for Information, at a discussion meeting on National Mourning Day at the Bangladesh High Commission on 15 August 2010



HE Muhammad Faruk Khan, Hon'ble Commerce Minister, called on HE Lim Hng Kiang, Hon'ble Minister of Trade and Industry on 23 September 2010



Cultural Show during Coffee Morning at High Commissioner's residence on 23 September 2010



Demonstration of the Gaye Holud (a ceremony performed before marriage day) at the Coffee Morning at High Commissioner's residence on 23 September 2010



Mrs. Saira Ahsan, wife of Bangladesh High Commissioner showing Bangladeshi handicrafts to HE Lim Hwee Hua, Minister at Prime Minister's Office on 4 December 2010



Dance performance to a popular Bangla folk song at SAARC Fair on 4 December 2010



HE Fowzia M Sana, Mrs. Saira Ahsan and HE Jayathri Samarakone with artists and guests at SAARC Fair on 4 December 2010



HE Md. Abdul Hamid, Hon'ble Speaker of Bangladesh National Parliament at a discussion meeting on 21st February 2011 at the High Commission



Commerce Secretary Md. Ghulam Hossain addresses Bangladesh Trade and Business Seminar at IE Singapore on 4 March 2011



High Commissioner HE Kamrul Ahsan addresses Bangladesh Trade and Business Seminar at IE Singapore on 4 March 2011



Bangladesh Trade and Business Seminar at IE Singapore on 4 March 2011

BANGLADESH

With impressive policies, Bangladesh has shown that it has the potential for economic growth and industrial achievement. The burgeoning domestic market presents plenty of opportunities for investors. Here is Bangladesh at a glance.

OFFICIAL NAME

People's Republic of Bangladesh

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

22° 43' North and 90° 24' East

AREA & POPULATION

147,570 sq km & Approximately 147 million

CAPITAL

Dhaka

TOTAL DISTRICTS

64

OTHER MAJOR CITIES

Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, Sylhet & Barisal

BOUNDARY

On three sides- East, North and West-India. South-East Myanmar. South-Bay of Bengal

ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS

Country is divided into seven Administrative Divisions. These are Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, Barisal, Rangpur and Sylhet. Each Division is divided into districts.

GOVERNMENT

Parliamentary form of government. The President is Head of the State, while the government is headed by the Prime Minister

BUSINESS HOURS

The official working hours in Bangladesh are from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm from Sunday to Thursday. Friday and Saturday are weekly holidays

PLACES OF TOURIST INTEREST

Dhaka, Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Kaptai, Rangamati, Khagrachari, Bandarban, Kuakata, Bogra, Khulna, the Sundarbans, Sylhet, Rajshahi, Dinajpur and Comilla

LANGUAGE

Bangla-Official Language, English-Second language and widely spoken

LABOUR FORCE

73.87 million

SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF LABOUR FORCE

Agriculture: 45 percent & Industry: 30 percent
Services: 25 percent

ECONOMY

Unit of Currency: Taka (Tk)
(US\$ 1 - Appx. 70.59 Taka)
GDP at Current Price:
Tk. 303206 million - US\$259.3 billion
GDP per Capita: US\$1,700 (PPP)
Industrial Growth: 6.4 percent
Inflation Rate: 8.1 percent
Investment Rate: 24.4 percent of GDP
National Savings Rate: 29.15 percent of GDP
Exports (US\$) in 2010: US\$ 16.24billion
Imports (US\$) in 2010: US\$ 21.34billion

*All data are of 2010

TIME GMT +6 Hours

Seasons: Summer, Monsoon, Autumn, Late Autumn, Winter and Spring
Climate: Tropical and moderate
Rainfall: 1100mm to 3400mm (June- Aug)
Principal Rivers: Padma, Meghna, Jamuna, Karnaphuli, Surma and Brahmaputra
Principal Crops: Paddy, Wheat, Jute, Sugarcane, Tobacco and Pulses

AIRPORTS

Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet, Jessore, Rajshahi, Saidpur, Barisal and Cox's Bazar. Among them, Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet are international airports.

PRINCIPAL EXPORTS

Ready made garments, Knitwear, Jute and Jute goods, Shrimps, Leather and Leather goods, Tea, Handicrafts, Agricultural products, Ceramic, Pharmaceuticals, Light Engineering Products, etc.

PRINCIPAL IMPORTS

Petroleum & Lubricants, Chemicals, Cement, Capital Machinery, Machinery parts, Tinned and Bagged Milk powder, Edible oil, Automobiles, electronics etc.

PRINCIPAL INDUSTRIES

Jute, Textile, Leather, Garments, Chemical, Fertilizer, Shrimp Processing, Sugar, Cement, Paper, Pharma, Engineering etc

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BANGLADESH

ON ITS

40th ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE

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