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Message from the Hon'ble President

March 26 is our great Independence and National Day. On the eve of the day, I convey my heartfelt greetings and felicitations to the fellow 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 nine-month long armed struggle and supreme sacrifices of millions of people.

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Message from the Hon'ble 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 of Bangladesh. The 26th March is a glorious day in our national life.

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Message from the Hon'ble Foreign Minister

Today, 26 March, 2012 Bangladesh celebrates its 41st Anniversary of Independence and Sovereignty. It is the 4th such occasion on which I am privileged to address you as your Foreign Minister. The Bangalee nation has travelled a long distance from its painful birth, from the sacrifices made by its men and women, young and old, as a nation united by the common cause of exercising sovereign statehood.

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Message from the High Commissioner

Today we are celebrating 41st anniversary of our Independence and National Day. On this memorable day, I remember with deep gratitude the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who proclaimed the country's independence on March 26, 1971.

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Editor's Note

As Bangladesh commemorates 41 years as a sovereign nation, it is our pleasure to present to you the 13th edition of *Opportunity Bangladesh*. Anniversaries call for celebrations and are an appropriate time to take stock.

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Message from the Hon'ble President



March 26 is our great Independence and National Day. On the eve of the day, I convey my heartfelt greetings and felicitations to the fellow 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 nine-month long armed struggle and supreme sacrifices of millions of people. 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 souls.

On this very memorable day, I recall with profound respect Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who proclaimed country's independence at the early hours on March 26, 1971. Responding to his clarion call, the 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 organisers 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. Fazlul Haque, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy and Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani who inspired our people at various stages for attaining country's self-sovereignty. The contributions of those valiant sons of the soil would be ever 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 materializing the objectives of independence. With the span of time, we have achieved some significant progresses in the field of agriculture, education, health, rural infrastructure, communication, ICT, SME, youth & sports, women and children, women empowerment, etc. at national level. At the same time we have also attained notable advancement in corporate sector including the area of readymade garments, pharmaceuticals, ceramic and ship-building industry. The Government is also very sincere to establish Rule of Law, Human Rights in the country. Our achievement at International arena is also praiseworthy. Yet, we have to go a long way for achieving the desired goals of independence and building a happy and prosperous Bangladesh. I believe concerted efforts from all strata irrespective of party affiliation are imperative in this regard.

The people of our country are democracy-loving. Without making

institutionalization of democracy, the overall development is hard to attain. Tolerance, fortitude and respect to other's opinion are the pre-conditions for flourishing democracy. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to maintain patience, forbearance at all level and to be respectful to other's opinion in a democratic pluralism. Let us make our Jatiya Sangsad as a centre of excellence in solving our national issues through discussion. I am confident, everybody irrespective of party affiliation would play 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 materializing the 'Vision' in 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 War of Liberation to expedite economic self-reliance and democratic advancement of the country.

May the Almighty be with us.

Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.

**His Excellency
Md. Zillur Rahman**

Hon'ble President of
the People's Republic of Bangladesh



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Message from the Hon'ble 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 of Bangladesh.

The 26th March is a glorious day in our national life. On this great day, I pay my deep homage to the 3 million martyrs and 200 thousand women who lost their innocence in the War of Liberation in 1971.

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, under whose dynamic leadership we earn our great independence.

I also pay my humble tributes to four national leaders and the valiant freedom fighters, who had fought against the Pakistani occupation forces to free our beloved motherland.

I extend my sympathies 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 wholehearted support and cooperation for the cause of our liberation.

The Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur

Rahman proclaimed the independence of Bangladesh at the first hour of the 26th March, 1971 after the occupation forces launched sudden attack on the innocent and unarmed Bangalees on the black night of the 25th March, 1971. Bangabandhu's proclamation was spread all over the country through telegrams, tele-printers and EPR wireless. At each and every district and subdivision, Awami League's leaders and workers publicized the declaration widely through mikes. The international media also had circulated Bangabandhu's proclamation of independence. Under the brave and dauntless leadership of Bangabandhu, we earned the ultimate victory on the 16th December, 1971 after a 9-month bloody war.

The independence earned through huge bloodbath and sacrifice is our people's greatest achievement. To ensure that this achievement remains meaningful, the spirit of our great liberation war should be reached to every nook and corner of the country. Cherishing the true history of the liberation war close to our hearts, we would have to go ahead in achieving the objectives of the Charter of Change by building a Bangladesh, free from corruption, mal-governance, terrorism, hunger and poverty.

The present Awami league government has been implementing huge development programmes in all sectors, including agriculture, education, health, law and order, information technology, energy and power and communications. The defeated anti-liberation, communal

and identified reactionary forces are trying to undo the democratic and development process of our beloved country at a time when our government had executed the verdict of Bangabandhu's assassination case, and is holding the trial of the war criminals.

On this auspicious day of our independence, I urge the countrymen to remain united to foil the ill-designed plots of the anti-democratic and anti-liberation forces against the government and the people.

We have been striving hard to establish Bangladesh as a poverty-, hunger- and illiteracy-free modern Digital Bangladesh by the Golden Jubilee year of our independence through implementing 'Vision-2021'. I hope that all citizens of our country would engage themselves with their utmost sincerity, honesty and dedication to build Bangladesh as a prosperous and prestigious country in comity of nations.

I am confident that Insha-Allah, with our united efforts, we would surely achieve our golden Bangladesh as envisioned by the Father of the Nation.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever

Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina
Hon'ble Prime Minister of
the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Message from the Hon'ble Foreign Minister



Today, 26 March, 2012 Bangladesh celebrates its 41st Anniversary of Independence and Sovereignty. It is the 4th such occasion on which I am privileged to address you as your Foreign Minister.

The Bangalee nation has travelled a long distance from its painful birth, from the sacrifices made by its men and women, young and old, as a nation united by the common cause of exercising sovereign statehood. In the wake of the assumption of responsibility as a government by people's representatives under a free and fair election a little over three years ago, the Awami League Government, together with the 14 Party Alliance, has made giant strides towards fulfilling our dreams. Most significantly, we have vigorously pursued the four fundamental principles of our Constitution and of our State Policy.

We have launched our pursuit of building a Sonar Bangla. We are able to envisage middle – income, digital, knowledge based Vision of Bangladesh in 2021. We have demonstrated intent and ability to forge partnerships with

our neighbours and far beyond. We are deeply involved in the process of multilateralism, through global and regional commitments. We are involved in social and economic restructuring through the empowerment of women and children: we have embarked on fashioning intergenerational equity; we continue to address ourselves to cooperating with developing countries in the framework of a global economic and political order.

We stand on the threshold of redressing the injustices inflicted upon us, historically and in more recent times. We are embarked in the process of redressing the imbalance in the relationship between developed and developing countries. Our policy and purpose to claim our entitlements occasioned by the factum of climate change is a major feature of our foreign policy. We seek to ensure better terms of trade with the United States and the European Union whilst at the same time pursuing greater fairness and equity in bilateral relations with our more resourceful neighbours and special friends. We have vastly improved our relations with our immediate neighbour, Myanmar, on such important issues as the Rohingya issue and in economic and cultural spheres.

We continue with new attention and new measures, to serve our men and women who work abroad, now numbering about 8 million, and increasing every year, whose contribution to our economy and welfare has provided us with a new dimension of the sovereign state that they represent. Our ever evolving policy to serve our expatriate workers has brought about hope for a better future for their welfare than just the contribution that they

render to the quality of life we enjoy within the country.

Bangladesh is now a role model for fighting poverty and extremism, empowering women, disaster management and in coping with the challenges posed by global warming and climate change. Bangladesh is often cited as one of the eleven emerging economies of the world. It has achieved remarkable success and recognition in the social sector. The winning of the MDG award for achieving targeted reduction in infant mortality and the UN South South Award for the use of modern technology in the development of women and child health by the Prime Minister bears testimony in this regard.

Since the Awami League assumed responsibility for conducting the affairs of the State, we have brought a judicial closure to the assassination case of Bangabandhu and his family and although some of the convicted continue to remain fugitives abroad, we are encouraged to believe that the horrors of impunity are being addressed. We have initiated the difficult process of bringing to justice war criminals through fair trials consistent with high standards of fair trial under international law. We have made much progress in the case against the BDR mutineers who threatened to shock and derail the Government within weeks of its assumption of State responsibility. Following Judgements of the apex Court, we have undertaken constitutional legislation, through the Fifteenth Amendment, to remedy the aberrations inflicted by military dictators and usurpers upon the Constitution. In Parliament, we have adopted significant legislation that has rendered the Constitution consistent with our founding principles of

Statehood. We believe that they have made deep inroads to reverse the culture of impunity which had besieged the nation since the assassination of the father of the Nation will effectively lay down a bedrock for the return, and advent, to the Rule of Law and Rule under the Constitution.

On foreign policy issues, the Government has continued to pursue its policy of friendship to all nations. Coupled with its elected character and the massive mandate it has received in the last general elections, Bangladesh now enjoys excellent relations with the outside world. The resolution of some long running issues with India and considerable progress to solve remaining ones, the successful holding of the Climate Vulnerable Forum Ministerial Meeting in Dhaka, the unanimous adoption of the Hon'ble Prime Minister's "people's empowerment" model at the Second Committee of the UN, Bangladesh's election to a record number of UN and international bodies, the decision to establish the Permanent Secretariat of the BIMSTEC in Dhaka, the prompt repatriation of about 37000 Bangladesh nationals from Libya etc., securing the return of 35 Bangladesh nationals, including 26 crew members, seized by Somali pirates and the release and safe return of 7 Bangladesh nationals from Afghanistan, are the hallmarks of the foreign policy pursued by the present Government during last three years. The winning of 'South South Award' during the 66th UNGA and 'MDG Award' by Hon'ble Prime Minister during the 65th UNGA for achieving impressive progress are eloquent testimonies in this regard. Without prejudice to our other achievements, we have been able to participate meaningfully in an ever expanding multilateral world and contribute to world peace-keeping efforts through the UN. Our efforts have resulted in Bangladesh being called a stabilizing State in the region.

Then, of course, we have enjoyed high success in pursuing our interests in our maritime claims. Ever since the birth of our nation, our entitlement to the territorial sea, the Exclusive economic Zone and the Continental Shelf appeared to be theoretical rights. They were, indeed, neglected and Bangladesh was unable to exercise sovereignty and sovereign rights over these territories contemplated in our Constitution. Callous neglect by successive Governments, military and quasi military, had deprived our people over the resources of these areas. Our Government, led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has successfully settled our maritime entitlements with our co-literal state, Myanmar through arbitration at ITLOS. Not only have been able to settle this issue we have settled it through peaceful means and respect for international law and principles laid down in the UN Charter to which we are committed.

That although our maritime entitlements remain unsettled with India, we have every reason to believe that we will be able to settle our claims peacefully and successfully through the arbitration process we have initiated at the International court of Arbitration and Bangladesh will emerge with vast new resources hitherto untapped and unavailed.

I wish to highlight the continuing engagement by, and efforts of, our Diaspora serve enormously towards the achievement of our foreign policy objectives. The introduction MRP and MRV have been introduced in almost half of the Bangladesh Missions abroad, together with the on going process to do so in the remaining Missions, reflects the high degree of success in that area. To find out business potentials and to aggressively explore employment for our nationals, the Government has sent fact-finding Missions to Latin America and Africa for the first time. We are planning to open new Missions abroad soon to

support our commercial drive and at a time when our export volume, remittance flow and inbound FDI are witnessing an upward trend.

I take this opportunity to thank all our officials and staff at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and our Missions abroad who have devoted themselves to achieving our foreign policy objectives. I also congratulate the Bangladesh Diaspora who has lent buoyancy of the economy of their country of origin as well as to their host countries.

No message, at this stage of our national life, can be complete without invoking the source of our inspiration, namely, the inspiration imbibed by Bangabandhu, the Father of our Bangalee Nation, our four national leaders who, in his absence, led us during the nine months to our ultimate victory, the martyrs who laid down their lives, our Freedom Fighters, who had risked their lives against a modern ruthless and genocidal army. I recall their cause and contribution in the great struggle for our independence and statehood. With the entire nation, I also recall, with the highest regard, those who suffered in silence, moved from shelter to shelter within the country, or took refuge across the border in India, without assurances of food or money on their person, and to those who lost their closest relatives and friends. I take the opportunity to remind ourselves that their will and aspirations embodied in our Constitution will provide the basis of all our endeavours.

Joy Bangla

Joy Bangabandhu

**Her Excellency
Dr. Dipu Moni, MP**
Hon'ble Foreign Minister of
the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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১। আমানত হিসাব :

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২। ঋণ/অগ্রীম :

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৩। অন্যান্য সেবা :

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Message from the High Commissioner



Today we are celebrating 41st anniversary of our Independence and National Day. On this memorable day, I remember with deep gratitude the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who proclaimed the country's independence on March 26, 1971. I also pay my profound tributes to the valiant freedom fighters and to those countless martyrs who responded to the call of Bangabandhu and laid down their lives for a free and independent Bangladesh.

Going on 41 years, as a nation, we have achieved many significant milestones since independence, making great progress in literacy, empowerment of women, alleviation of poverty, primary health care and social entrepreneurship. Bangladesh can also boast for its fairly healthy macro-economic fundamentals and socio-economic stability. It has been maintaining a GDP growth of more than 5.5% for over last two decades. This year it is expected to reach 7% for the first time. We further expect our GDP to grow around 8% by 2012 and around 10% by 2015. According to the International Monetary Fund, Bangladesh ranked as the 43rd largest economy in the world in 2010 in PPP terms and 57th largest in nominal terms with a gross domestic product of US\$269.3 billion in PPP terms and US\$104.9 billion in nominal term. In export arena, Bangladesh is also doing exceedingly well in textile, jute and jute products, finished leathers, ship building, electrical and electronics, household appliances, leather goods, agro-foods, IT, ICT and

pharmaceuticals. Bangladesh is now globally the third largest exporter of apparels with close to US\$18 billion dollar exports in 2010. Our total export earnings for the current fiscal year ended at June 2011 was US\$23 billion which is 41% higher than the previous fiscal year. During the last nine months the exports are growing further.

Bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Singapore have made great progress in recent years. The two countries have long enjoyed positive and constructive relations. Singapore was the first South East Asian country to recognise Bangladesh on 12 February 1972. We started with a Trade Commission in Singapore in 1973 that was eventually upgraded to a High Commission in 1983. We have come a long way since then. Relationships between Bangladesh and Singapore have been strengthened by long standing trade and commercial interests. Over the last few years, several high level visits also took place between the two countries. This has helped evolve the relationship into a significant partnership in recent years.

Increasing trade and investment with Singapore is a core objective in our relationship. Bilateral trade between the two countries already exceeded S\$3 billion. Though investment from Singapore is mostly concentrated in the areas of textiles and telecommunications, however, availability of cheap and skilled work force, legal protection for investors, liberal economic policies regarding repatriation of capital and profit, ease of setting up business, one stop service at the Board of Investment, tax holidays and other incentives are now attracting more investors from Singapore who have shown interests in the areas of infrastructure building, hospitality and service sectors, tourism, banking and finance. We are happy that International Enterprises (IE), Singapore and Singapore Business Federation in close co-ordination with Bangladesh High Commission are constantly updating the business houses in Singapore on

trade and investment opportunities in Bangladesh.

Singapore is now home to more than 125,000 vibrant Bangladeshis. First Bangladeshi professionals started to come to Singapore in the early seventies mainly to work as University and Polytechnic faculty members, Engineers, Mariners and Bankers. Then in the mid-eighties skilled and semi-skilled work forces started to arrive in Singapore in the construction and shipbuilding sectors in large numbers. With high quality workmanship and discipline, the demand of Bangladeshi workers is growing fast.

The High Commission of Bangladesh in Singapore is committed to further strengthening of the bilateral political and economic relations by nurturing existing linkages and striving to build stronger bonds of cooperation, interaction and understanding between our two countries.

The publication of *Opportunity Bangladesh* over the years has greatly assisted the High Commission in depicting Bangladesh, particularly the potential in trade, investment, tourism, long history and cultural traditions that Bangladesh boasts of, in Singapore. *Opportunity Bangladesh* raises the awareness among our Singaporean friends and other friends in Singapore on the continuous efforts of the Government of Bangladesh for attracting more and more foreign direct investment, especially from Singapore.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the Government and friendly people of Singapore for enabling this High Commission to carry out its activities smoothly by extending their full support and cooperation.

Long live Bangladesh-Singapore friendship.

His Excellency Kamrul Ahsan
High Commissioner for
The People's Republic of Bangladesh
in Singapore

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Editor's Note



As Bangladesh commemorates 41 years as a sovereign nation, it is our pleasure to present to you the 13th edition of *Opportunity Bangladesh*.

Anniversaries call for celebrations and are an appropriate time to take stock. In the last 13 years, this magazine has chronicled opportunities, success stories, and developments on the bilateral front between Bangladesh and Singapore.

It has been our endeavour to present our readers with a wide spectrum of prospects to tap and leverage on. Bringing policy changes and updates on an annual basis for the industry to comprehend and act on has always been an underlying factor in shaping the content of this magazine.

This magazine is a celebration for everyone. It celebrates the beginning of the epoch, the growth of inspiring individuals, the multiplication

of resources, and Bangladesh reaching out to the world through its involvement at many multilateral forums such as the Red Cross and the United Nations.

Traditionally, investors from all over the world were drawn to Bangladesh mainly for ease in getting cost effective manpower. This is the reason the garment industry has been thriving for the last many decades. Over the years, the Bangladeshi workforce has also honed new skills that have added value to investors' returns.

Bangladesh has shown a consistent growth of six percent in last few years. Clubbed with investor-friendly policies and its strategic location, new industries such as shipbreaking and shipbuilding have also emerged. We bring you an update.

All sectors of the economy — agricultural, industrial and services — have shared in the growth, and 90 per cent of annual public expenditure now comes from domestic sources.

Singapore, too, continues to forge a very warm and deep-rooted relationship with Bangladesh, and the bilateral relations between the two countries are definitely on an ascending growth trajectory.

Bangladesh has been devoting utmost efforts for attracting foreign direct investments (FDI) offering a host of lucrative incentives and benefits. Bangladesh offers a strong local market, greater global market access

and proven export competitiveness. She recognises foreign investment as the key driver and catalyst of economic growth and development to build the envisioned "Digital Bangladesh".

As you read *Opportunity Bangladesh*, you can distinctly sense that Bangladesh has enormous economic potential, not least due to its geographic location. Situated between India and Southeast Asia and only a short distance from China, Bangladesh is positioning itself as a regional economic hub.

Demographics may also play a favourable role in Bangladesh's future. Of its population of over 150 million people, more than half are under the age of 40. Such a sizeable, inexpensive pool of workforce could pay the same dividends in Bangladesh as it has in China, India and elsewhere.

Bangladesh, 2012, is a country pulsating with startling energy and we would like to extend our invitation to all businessmen to be part of this growth and dynamism. Our special thanks also to the advertisers for their support, and we wish all Bangladeshis and friends of Bangladesh a very Happy National Day!

Happy reading!

Nomita Dhar
Editor



PM Makes Six-point Peace Model Plan at the United Nations

PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HASINA HAS UNVEILED A SIX-POINT MULTI-DIMENSIONAL PEACE MODEL FOR CHAMPIONING DEMOCRACY AND PEOPLE'S EMPOWERMENT, COINCIDING WITH THE UNGA THEME "MEDIATION IN THE PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL DISPUTES".

The six multipliers of her proposed model include eradication of poverty and hunger, reduction of inequality, mitigation of deprivation, inclusion of excluded people, acceleration of human development and elimination of terrorism.

"In fact, my life-time experiences have inspired me to come up with a new peace model. I call it the 'People's empowerment model' that reaffirms all people should be treated equally and emphasises the scope of human capabilities which can be realised through peace," she said in her address at the 66th UN General Assembly on September 24 2011.

Many heads of state and government were present as she delivered her speech in Bangla during the UNGA general debate at the United Nations headquarters.

The Prime Minister said prosperity is achievable with the removal of injustices in an environment of peace.

"This is possible by individual nations through sincere

implementation of what is right, or sometimes under the guidance of the United Nations."

Amid clapping from the audience, she told delegates: "Let us all try to test this model of peace which I believe has the potential to transform our world of seven billion people into one where our future generations may prosper and live in happiness."

Reposing her trust in peace as the basis for development, she said: "I believe peace prevails when justice prevails. Therefore, justice at home and abroad is important for ensuring a peaceful mediation and settlement of disputes."

In her 20-minute statement, Sheikh Hasina touched upon some vital issues of national importance including





settlement of long running border problem with India through discussion, mediated settlement of the BDR mutiny and trial of the perpetrators responsible for 1971 war crimes.

She sought international support to pursue the efforts being made to change the fate of the people and develop socio-economic security.

"The LDCs like Bangladesh need international support. The support must come from granting us market access, removing trade barriers, fulfillment of ODA, combating climate change, as well as giving us equal voice in the Bretton Woods Institutions," she said.

The commitments made in Istanbul this May on agriculture, energy, infrastructure, water and migration would also strengthen the economic stability of the LDCs, the PM added.

"Now, it is time for the development partners to implement the commitments made in Monterrey, Paris, and Brussels before the conclusion of the Doha Development Round. Support must continue to enable LDCs to fulfill their MDGs."

Reiterating her administration's "zero tolerance policy against terrorism", she said the government's aim is to break the nexus between terrorism, extremism and radicalisation, and eliminate them all from Bangladesh, a state party to all UN counterterrorism conventions.

She said: "I'm fully committed to battling terrorism in all its forms, having personally suffered from acts of terror. I recall with profound sadness, the brutal assassination of my father, the first President of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and 18 of my immediate family members, including

my mother and three brothers, on August 15, 1975.

"I also recall the grenade attack on me and my followers at a peace rally on August 21, 2004, that left 24 dead and nearly 500 injured. I escaped miraculously but with permanent loss of hearing.

"I often think of all the victims of terrorism, especially those of the 9/11 attacks in New York and elsewhere around the world. Indeed, if peace is to prevail, these terrorists must be brought to justice."

Sheikh Hasina also reminded delegates of Bangladesh's "strong commitment to conflict resolution".

"Bangladesh has partnered in many of UN's endeavours for peace, democracy and development. Our contribution to UN peacekeeping has so far been 102, 294 peacekeepers in 52 missions and 36 countries. This

includes the sad loss of lives of 103 brave Bangladeshis. Our involvement also includes UN's first ever, all women police unit in Haiti," she said.

In UN Peace Building Commission, as NAM Coordinator, Bangladesh always advocated peace building, development and preventive diplomacy in post conflict societies.

She said: "Sadly, we remain woefully under represented at planning and strategy levels of the DPKO, an issue calling for a speedy resolution. As member of UN Human Rights Council and the ECOSOC, we consciously promote democracy, secularism, justice, rule of law, equal rights of women, children, minorities, and other vulnerable groups. As executive body member of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO, and FAO, we are committed to setting global norms and standards in development practices."

Referring to the winning of the UN award for MDG-4 on reducing child mortality last year, Sheikh Hasina said Bangladesh is on track on MDG-1 on poverty alleviation, MDG-2 on universal primary education, MDG-3 on gender equality and MDG-5 on reducing maternal mortality.

"Our Poverty Reduction Strategy is in tandem with the MDGs and intends to raise 12 million people out of poverty by 2015."



Bangladesh

Integrating with the World

PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HASINA, SINCE ASSUMING OFFICE IN JANUARY 2009, HAS PURSUED AN ACTIVE FOREIGN POLICY TO MAXIMISING ECONOMIC GOALS. PRIORITY HAS BEEN PLACED ON BOLSTERING TRADE, CONNECTIVITY AND ECONOMIC TIES WITH THE COUNTRIES OF THE EXPANDED NEIGHBOURHOOD IN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA AND BEYOND.



In line with Bangladesh's foreign policy of integrating with the world to create more opportunities, there have been important VVIP visits also to China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia as well as incoming visits from Turkey, China, Bhutan and Sri Lanka.

Remarkable breakthroughs have been made in boosting relations with India through the highly-successful official visit by the Indian Prime Minister in September 2011 following the Bangladesh Prime Minister's visit to India in January 2010.

SOUTH-SOUTH AWARD FOR BANGLADESH

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been awarded the South-South Award for her outstanding contributions to improving the lives of women and children.

UN Economic Commission for Africa, Permanent Mission of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations, International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and South-South News jointly introduced the awards.

Governments, organisations, and individuals, who have succeeded in scaling-up and replicating the implementation of the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and beyond at the national level were honoured with the award.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, president of Dominican Republic Leonel Fernandez and Vice Chairman of Johnson and Johnson Sheri McCoy were given the award in the category of Women and Children Health. President of Rwanda Paul Kagame and Senegal President Abdoulaye Wade were among others who received the award in other categories.

Secretary General of the ITU Hammadou Toure handed over the award to Sheikh Hasina at a colourful ceremony at hotel Waldorf Astoria on September 19 2011 in New York.

He said Sheikh Hasina was selected for the award for her innovative idea to use the information and communication technology for progress of the health of women and children. This year's theme of the award was 'Digital Health For Digital Development'.

President of the 66th session of the UN General Assembly Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser and President of South-South



News Ambassador Francis Lorenzo, addressed, among others, on the occasion while a message of the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon was read out.

Receiving the award, Sheikh Hasina said it was a great honour for her and people of Bangladesh as well, for recognition of the South peers to the hard work of the people of her country and government.

'SAARC CHARTER OF DEMOCRACY'

Bangladesh mooted the idea of a SAARC Charter of Democracy for nations of South Asia at the 16th Summit in Thimpu.

The thinking behind the charter was to recognise and reaffirm the commitment of all South Asian nations to democracy. It was drafted by a technical committee in September 2010 and approved by the standing committee comprising of the foreign secretaries of all SAARC nations in February last year.

The charter contains many important provisions that recognise the supremacy of the respective constitutions, guarantee the independence of the judiciary, and renounce unconstitutional measures adopted in changing the head of a state. Though the provisions in themselves do not mean much in reality, the recognition of democracy as one of the starting points for cooperation is an important step in the actualisation of the aims of SAARC.

In identifying democracy as a basis for progress in South



Asia, the charter underscores the need for stable democratic governments in an increasingly volatile neighbourhood. Almost all the countries face challenges to the democratic institutions established under their respective constitutions that have posed a threat to their stability.

BIMSTEC PERMANENT SECRETARIAT

BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) has decided to establish its permanent Secretariat in Dhaka.

This is seen as a major achievement for Bangladesh as this will be the first full-fledged secretariat of any regional organisation in Dhaka.

The question of the location of the permanent Secretariat remained unresolved for the last few years with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka both vying for hosting the prestigious seat of this emerging regional organisation.

The BIMSTEC Ministers decided that Sri Lanka would nominate the first Secretary General for the organisation. The Secretariat is expected to be formally launched in Dhaka in early this year.



UN SECRETARY GENERAL VISIT

UN Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon visited Bangladesh on November 13 for a three-day visit. A key objective of his visit was to showcase the progress and leadership in advancing women's and children's health in the context of the "Every Woman Every Child" effort he initiated in 2010.

He visited a community clinic in the north-eastern region, where community health workers are being trained by a government-led effort to drastically increase the number of pregnant women assisted by a skilled birth attendant during childbirth.

Speaking at a 'courtyard meeting' with expectant mothers at Mobarakpur, a remote village of Moulvibazar District, he said that the UN wants to showcase to the world Bangladesh's achievement in the field of child and maternal health.

"I'm very impressed to see the remarkable achievement of Bangladesh government in reducing child and maternal mortality rates. The government is doing an excellent job," he said.

During the three-day visit, he met with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and other senior ministers and the Leader of the Opposition. He also met with private sector leaders on women's and children's health.

STAND ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is the single most important challenge the world faces, and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stressed that Bangladesh, a country that is all too familiar with the impact of extreme weather events, is a global leader in disaster risk reduction.



In 1991, a cyclone killed more than 140,000 people in the South Asian nation. Then in 2007, when another major cyclone struck, many volunteers helped move thousands of people out of the disaster area, ultimately saving countless lives. The death toll from that tragedy was 4,000.

"Because of its adaption and preparedness measures, the people of Bangladesh are much safer today," he said in remarks to the second Climate Vulnerable Forum, which he opened in Dhaka with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

"The lesson is clear: Natural hazards need not cause human catastrophe. There are many cost-effective remedies that communities and countries can

take to reduce the impact of extreme weather events," he stated.

Mr. Ban noted that this was a key message of a special report released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), on Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters.

"The severity of cyclones, floods and other consequences of climate change are increasing," he stated. "Strong disaster risk reduction and adaptation policies will be increasingly essential."

Bangladesh is acutely aware of its vulnerability to the growing impacts of climate change—cyclones, flooding, sea level rise, noted the Secretary-General. "You are on the front line of climate change."

Three Years of Progress

Bangladesh with Immense Potential

BANGLADESH IS A COUNTRY OF IMMENSE POTENTIAL. UTILISING HER NATURAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES, IT CAN VERY WELL BE TURNED INTO THE 'GOLDEN BENGAL', DREAMT BY BANGABANDHU. FOLLOWING THE PATH OF LANGUAGE MOVEMENT IN 1952, FATHER OF THE NATION BANGABANDHU SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN SOWED THE SEED OF INDEPENDENCE IN THE MIND OF HIS PEOPLE THROUGH THE SIX-POINT MOVEMENT IN 1966.

Under his dynamic leadership, epoch making decisions were taken to reconstruct the country. The primary and mass education programmes were introduced at all levels, 40,000 primary schools were nationalised, opportunity of education and employments was opened for female, education commission was constituted and country's road and highway communication was reestablished.

Within a year, Chittagong, Mongla and Chalna ports were made functional by sweeping out mines and removing the sunken vessels. Hardinge Bridge, Bhairab Bridge and other numerous bridges and culverts were repaired restoring the local communication network partly. Millions of acres of coastal land were saved by building embankments along the coastal line.

The development trend that Bangabandhu set in motion has still remained an example for the newly independent least developed nations.

Now under the capable leadership of Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh is put right on the track defying the global economic crisis. Some of the successes achieved in the socio-economic and administrative sectors in the last three years of the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina are briefly described below.

E-GOVERNANCE

'District e-service centres' have enabled the people to get all the services including getting parcha from the district administration. All the textbooks of primary, secondary, madrasa and technical education boards have been transformed into e-books and posted on the websites in downloadable and printable formats.

With an aim to providing services to the grassroots level people, Information and Service Centres have been set up in all the Union Parishads (4501) of the country. As a result, the villagers are getting multiple services like government forms, information about passport and visa, nationality certificate, results of public examinations and information on agriculture, education, health and law instantly in their villages.

SIXTH FIVE-YEAR PLAN

The Sixth Five-Year Plan has been finalised in the light of the government's long-term development plan and has been approved by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC). The specific objectives of this plan are to increase the national growth to 8%, to reduce poverty margin to 29%, to increase the per capita income to 1,000

US dollars, to increase the literacy rate to 100% and to achieve self-sufficiency in food and to create social safety net for the poor people.

LEGAL AID

Till November 2011, a total of 33,000 poor people have been provided with legal aid at government cost. The construction of five district registry office buildings and nine sub-registry office buildings have been completed. 90% of the construction work of the Dhaka Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court building and the construction of the Police Custody cum Police Barrack has been completed. A complete model of legal aid programme has been introduced to several districts.

For settling the cases in the shortest possible time, 55 judges have been appointed at the High Court while 215 officers have been recruited in the vacant posts of Assistant Judge and Judicial Magistrate at the subordinate courts.

REDUCING FERTILISER PRICE

Within only six days after assuming the power, the present Government reduced the price of urea fertiliser. For the first time, about 14 million farmers have been issued agricultural equipment aid card through which nine million bank accounts have been opened

The development trend that Bangabandhu set in motion has still remained an example for the newly independent least developed nations.

and financial aids have been given to the farmers. In the last two fiscal years, huge volume of fertilisers costing Taka 61 crore has been distributed among the farmers as an incentive for cultivating the aush crop. Fertilisers and seeds costing 48 crore taka have been distributed among the affected farmers of the haor areas.

EDUCATION POLICY 2010

The government is distributing the text-books to the students on the very first academic day of the year at a programme titled “Textbook Festival”. All these books are being published in the websites as well. National Education Policy 2010 has been adopted. All important services including results of public examinations, admission and recruitment are available online now.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS ADMISSION

The rate of admission to primary schools has reached 99.64%. 7.8 millions of poor students have been given stipends of about taka 880 crore, new textbooks have been distributed among one crore US\$10,000 (approx.) of school-children; 75-gram biscuit for each of the two million children of 61 upazilas has been given on every school-day; about 1.5 lakh schoolbags, books, pencils etc. have been distributed among the school-children.

MORE HIGHWAY EMBANKMENT

1,414 km highway embankment has been constructed and widened, 837 km long new road has been

constructed, 2,076 km long road has been widened and developed, 24,446 metre concrete bridge and 15,479 metre RCC culvert have been constructed. A fly-over from Mirpur to Airport road via Dhaka Cantonment, and an overpass at Banani rail-crossing are being constructed. The construction work of upgrading all the national highways is ongoing.

UNITED NATIONS MDG AWARD

Bangladesh achieved United Nations MDG Award in 2010 for her success in reducing the child mortality rate and South South Award in 2011 for the successful utilisation of information technology in the development of women and child health.

Maternal mortality rate is now 194 per 100,000 live birth. About 45,000 employees have been appointed including 5133 doctors, 1747 nurses and 13500 CHCPs. 11262 community clinics have been made functional.

NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL POLICY

The National Industrial Policy 2010 has been passed and the draft of the Industrial Laws has been prepared. Digital sugarcane purchase order e-purji system has been introduced. Progoti Industries has been able to add Pajero sports vehicles CR-45 in collaboration with the Mitsubishi Corporation of Japan. National Salt Policy 2011 has been adopted. Patent, Design and Trademarks Act 2009 has been passed. More than one thousand females and males have got employment after taking practical training from BITAC.

GREATER FOREIGN CLOUD

Bangladesh has been familiarised in the world community as a liberal, democratic, non-communal and responsible country. Bangladesh achieved remarkable success in cases of the establishment of BIMSTEC permanent secretariat in Dhaka, approval of the SAARC Charter of Democracy initiated by Bangladesh, sending of the highest number of peacekeepers and police in the UN missions, the instance of Bangladesh's being elected in the record number of posts in the UN and other international organisations, organising climate vulnerable forum conference in Dhaka, introduction of MRP and MRV facilities in 17 missions and progress in demarcating the sea-borders with India and Myanmar.

SECURITY SCANNING MACHINE

Latest security scanning machine has been installed in the Cargo Village of Harat Shahjalal International Airport. Cox's Bazar Airport Development (Phase-I) project implementation is going on at the cost of Taka 302 crore 65 lakh. Two Boeing Aeroplanes have been procured for Biman Bangladesh Airlines and procurement of additional eight such aircrafts is in the process. Online booking system has been introduced.

GAMES AND SPORTS

About 64,000 youths have been provided with credits of an amount exceeding Taka 181 crore. The gorgeous inauguration and closing ceremonies of the 11th South Asian Games was a great success. Bangladesh occupied third position in the 11th South Asian Games by bagging 18 gold, 24 silver and 55 bronze medals. The inauguration tournament of the ICC World Cup 2011 was also a success and eight matches, including two quarter finals, were held in Dhaka.



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Bangladesh Wins 'BAY' LEGAL BATTLE

THE INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE LAW OF THE SEA RECENTLY SUSTAINED BANGLADESH'S CLAIMS TO A FULL 200-MILE EXCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ZONE IN THE BAY OF BENGAL, AND TO A SUBSTANTIAL SHARE OF THE OUTER CONTINENTAL SHELF BEYOND 200 MILES.



The ruling, by a vote of 21 to 1, brought to a conclusion the case initiated by Bangladesh against Myanmar in December 2009, to resolve a longstanding dispute in regard to the maritime boundary between the two neighbouring states in the oil-and-gas rich bay.

Judge José Luis Jesus, President of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), pronounced the verdict in Hamburg, Germany, on March 14, according to a press statement issued by the Foreign Ministry.

The Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni presided over an eminent legal team, including: the Deputy Agent, Rear Admiral (Ret) Md. Khurshed Alam; as well as attorneys James Crawford, Philippe Sands and Alan Boyle of the United Kingdom; Paul Reichler and

the Foreign Minister continued. "Bangladesh's full access to the high seas out to 200 miles and beyond is now recognised and guaranteed, as are our undisputed rights to the fish in our waters and the natural resources beneath our seabed." The Tribunal also awarded Bangladesh a full 12-mile territorial sea around St. Martin's Island, overruling Myanmar's argument that it should be cut in half.

The 151-page judgment was the first by any court or tribunal to delimit the maritime area beyond 200 miles, known as the "outer continental shelf", and is certain to establish an important precedent.

The International Tribunal, based in Hamburg and known as ITLOS, was established by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to adjudicate disputes between States concerning issues covered by the

Lawrence Martin of the United States; and Payam Akhavan of Canada.

"This is a great day for Bangladesh," declared the Foreign Minister, just after the defining moment was over.

"All of our strategic objectives were achieved,"

convention, including the delimitation of maritime boundaries.

"Today's ruling constitutes the equitable solution that Bangladesh has long desired, but was unable to obtain during 38 years of diplomatic stalemate preceding the lawsuit," the Foreign Minister asserted. "The bold and visionary decision of the Prime Minister to seek a binding judicial resolution of this longstanding dispute has been vindicated."

"But it is a victory for both states, because it finally resolves - peacefully and according to international law - a problem that had hampered the economic development of both states for more than three decades. We salute Myanmar for its willingness to resolve this matter by legal means and for its acceptance of the tribunal's judgment", she said.

Myanmar had claimed that its maritime boundary with Bangladesh cut directly across the Bangladesh coastline, severely truncating Bangladesh's maritime jurisdiction to a narrow wedge of sea not extending beyond 130 miles.

Myanmar also claimed that the tribunal lacked jurisdiction to award continental shelf rights beyond 200 miles from either State's coast. The tribunal rejected both of these arguments.



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Promoting Pro-poor Growth

DR. ATIUR RAHMAN
GOVERNOR, BANGLADESH BANK

A NATION REQUIRES A VISION FOR ITS CHERISHED DEVELOPMENT. THE ELECTION MANIFESTO OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT 'VISION-2021' HAS BEEN PREPARED WITH THE DREAM OF MAKING A NEW BANGLADESH AT THE OUTSET OF GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATION OF OUR GREAT INDEPENDENCE.

A promise of fundamental transformation in all spheres including socio-economical and political arena has been reflected in this vision that also covers the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The present government has placed poverty alleviation and elimination of all sorts of inequity at the forefront of its development strategy. Strengthening of social safety nets, food autarky, faster agricultural growth, employment generation etc. are identified as some of the key challenges for attaining the goals. This article focused on the initiatives taken by the present government during last three years for improvement of mass people especially on poverty alleviation, social safety nets, food security and agricultural sector.

POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Poverty eradication, the first condition for development, is the main challenge of the present government. Adam Smith in his book 'Wealth of Nations' noted, 'No society can surely be flourishing and happy of which by far the greater part of the numbers are poor and miserable'. So, undertaking of long term effective programs is required. The government has taken a strategy for combating poverty reduction both in short and

long terms. In the poverty reduction strategy framework of the revised National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction II (NSAPR II), special importance has been given on creation of macroeconomic environment, identification of critical areas and essential infrastructure for pro-poor growth and social protection for the vulnerable section of the society and human resources development. During the last three years, the government had succeeded in groundbreaking for attaining the desired growth. In spite of internal and external obstacles, real GDP growth rate was 6.7 percent in FY 2010-11 which is the highest in last 40 years due to the higher growth in agriculture, manufacturing and service sector and the target for FY 2011-12 is 7.0 percent. In FY 2009-11, per capita income increased by 24 percent compared to 19 percent in the period FY 2002-04. Due to macroeconomic stability, domestic savings rate increased to 19.93 percent during the last three years against 18.77 percent in FY 2002-04. Export growth has increased to 47 percent during the last three years of the present government.

On the other hand, export growth rate was 27 percent in FY 2002-04. The rate of inward remittance was three times higher during the last

three years of the present government compared to that of FY 2002-04. According to the primary report of 'Household Income and Expenditure Survey-2010', population living below the poverty line decreased to 31.5 percent in 2010 from 40.4 percent in 2005. During this period, poverty gap reduced significantly while income inequality ratio decreased moderately. The government has been increasing its revenue budget to eradicate poverty. Bangladesh has achieved significant progress in poverty reduction and targets of the MDGs. Achievement of the United Nations Award on reduction of child mortality rate is undoubtedly recognition of the success of the present government.

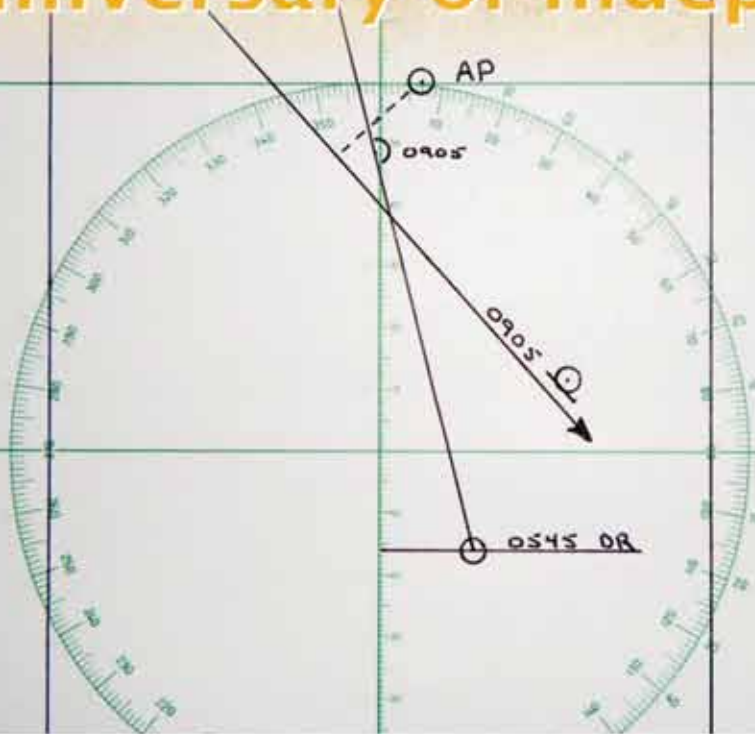
Bangladesh is also in the right track for attaining other MDG targets including eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, women empowerment etc.

SOCIAL SAFETY NETS

Since the government believes in long term development vision, it considers social safety net programs not only as a tool of poverty reduction but also as a crisis-fighting-instrument. Microfinance is one of the important determinants for empowering poor population so that they can survive

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facing poverty. Growth of employment and income generating agricultural and SME sectors is speeding up the poverty eradication process and playing an important role in achieving extensive sustainable economic and social upliftment. The government is trying to empower the extreme poor by providing special grants and supports in the area of education, health, service and training to generate self-employment through microcredit facilities and to ensure food security for hardcore poor by providing food free of cost or at fair price. During the last three years, the areas of social safety net programs and allocation for it have increased.

Social safety net programme include Old Age Allowance, Widow, Divorced and Distressed Women Allowance Scheme, Allowances for the Insolvent Disabled Programme, Education Scholarship for disabled students, increase in honorarium of insolvent freedom fighter etc. 'One House One Farm' is a notable successful initiative of the government in reducing poverty. This project has been implemented in 9,640 villages of 482 upazillas. Government's housing loan scheme (Grihayan Tahbil).

DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE SECTOR

Agriculture is the prime among the priority sectors of the government. The aim of the government is to achieve self-sufficiency in food by 2013. A number of steps have been initiated for the expansion of small irrigation facilities, removal of water logging, production of improved quality and high yielding varieties of seeds and their distribution

and development and expansion of the varieties of crops suitable for the weather and environment of a particular region. The highest priority has been attached to increasing the production of domestic food grains. The supply of agriculture inputs at a reasonable price is being continued with providing of subsidies.

The prices of fertilizers have been reduced thrice to keep them within the grip of purchasing power of the farmers. Taka 48.92 billion was granted as agriculture subsidy in FY 2009-10 and the allocation for agriculture subsidy was Taka 57.0 billion and Taka 45.0 billion in FY 2010-11 and 2011-12 respectively. The successful decoding of genome sequencing of jute has unfolded a new vista for further invention of new high yielding species of jute, which are expected to be salinity-resistant and tolerant to drought, insects and diseases. Along with extensive credit facilities in the agriculture sector, Bangladesh Bank has brought qualitative changes in the process of credit flow specially by strengthening monitoring activities so that the farmers can avail hassle-free credit in time in a transparent way. Disbursement of agriculture credit in FY 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12 (upto September 2011) was Taka 115.12 billion, Taka 121.84 billion and Taka 20.52 billion respectively.

The target for the current financial year is Taka 138.0 billion, which is the highest so far. A refinance scheme of Taka 5.0 billion has been launched to ensure the credit facilities for the landless sharecroppers who were otherwise deprived of institutional credit.

FOOD SECURITY

Enormous success has been achieved in ensuring food security. The government has updated the 'Food Security Policy' with a view to ensuring food security for the hardcore poor and prepared 'Bangladesh Food Security Investment Plan 2010' in order to develop a sustainable food security system. The three elements which are very important to ensure food security in the country are adequate supply of food, increasing the purchasing power of people for getting food and ensuring nutrition for all.

It is possible to make Bangladesh a country free from poverty and hunger, if the country can be upgraded to a 'middle income' country by 2020 in line with the vision of the government. For this, all the initiatives taken for poverty eradication must be expedited in the coming days. Campaign for 'financial inclusion' should be accelerated with the participation of poor and disadvantaged people as an effective weapon for poverty eradication; adequate credit flows should be ensured for social security and other productive pursuits including agriculture, SMEs and environment friendly projects; effective measures should be taken so that people can cope with the climate change. There exists a worldwide acclamation for Bangladeshi people for survival combating all odds. Their creativity is endless. Both society and government should create an environment of confidence for further advancement of this fighting nation. Let all of us strive to make this commitment meaningful.



Bangladesh

An Ultimate Opportunity for Trade and Investment

A.K. AZAD, PRESIDENT

FEDERATION OF BANGLADESH CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

BANGLADESH PROCLAIMED ITS INDEPENDENCE ON MARCH 26, 1971 AS A SOVEREIGN STATE AND ACHIEVED VICTORY, ON DECEMBER 16, 1971, IN THE WAR OF LIBERATION THAT CLAIMED THREE MILLION LIVES. THE IMMEDIATE CHALLENGE THEN, WAS THE RESTORATION OF THE WAR RAVAGED ECONOMY AND FORGING A PATH FOR ECONOMIC EMANCIPATION.

Bangladesh, the first country in the world that fought for the right to use their mother tongue Bangla, celebrates National Mother Language Day on February 21 and International Mother Language Day is thus celebrated on the same day. Today Bangladesh is truly a nation of democratic governance, religious harmony and highly valued UN peace keeping services.

We are now a nation of about 148 million people. Currently, the total active workforce of the country stood at around 56.7 million out of which about 2.6 million persons remain unemployed. Unlike older industrialised societies with growing legions of ageing dependents, Bangladesh at its youthful age has a very youthful demography. 36.63% of the population are economically active (15 years and over).

According to an International Rating Agency, Bangladesh holds sound macro-economic fundamentals and better credit worthiness. In South

Asia, one of the least economically integrated regions of the world; Bangladesh ranks second, just after India. This rating broadly incorporates financial and balance of payments robustness, continued economic stability and sustained growth at around 6% per annum over the last one decade. Stable prices, exchange rates, high foreign currency reserves and growing home remittances from overseas Bangladeshi workers contribute a lot to this achievement. Policy consistency along with steady progress in trade openness has helped steady economic growth.

During the last decade on an average the GDP growth rate was 6%, export growth was 15% and revenue growth was 20% in every year. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has played a key role in the modernisation of the Bangladesh economy for the last 15 years. Rightly, Bangladesh is a winning combination with its competitive business-friendly environment and cost structure that can give investors best returns due to Strategic Location, Regional Connectivity and Worldwide Access, Industrious and Easily Trainable Low-Cost Workforce, Strong Local Market Growth, Low Cost Of

**Today Bangladesh is truly a nation of
democratic governance, religious
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peace keeping services.**

Energy, Proven Export Competitiveness, Competitive incentives, Export and Economic Zones which altogether create a positive investment climate.

Furthermore, the FDI Policy Framework & Incentives are not only liberal but ensures secure and highly profitable investments. The facilities and incentives include tax exemption on royalties, interests on foreign loans and on capital gains from transfer of shares by the investing company. There are no restrictions on issuance of work permits to project related foreign nationals and employees and the remittances of up to 50% of salaries of the foreigners employed in Bangladesh can be repatriated which also includes repatriation of their savings and retirement benefits at the time of their return. Repatriation of invested capital, profits and dividends is also allowed. Bangladesh provides a level playing field for foreign owned companies duly registered in Bangladesh which are in the same footing as locally owned ones.

Investors can also invest in the planned 7 Special Economic Zones (SEZ) under Public Private Partnership

(PPP) or 100% privately owned SEZs. Through these SEZs, investors can target both the local market and export market.

Singapore's commercial relationship with Bangladesh has grown significantly in the last few years. The value of bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Singapore has increased from US\$932.03 million in FY2005-06 to US\$1.4 billion in FY2010-11. Bangladesh's exports to Singapore for the FY 2010-11 was US\$ 113.41 million whereas imports were US\$ 1291.28 million. The proposed foreign and joint venture investment recorded by the Board of Investment to Bangladesh from Singapore stood at US\$ 115.83 million in 2010-2011 which for the FY 2009-2010 was only US\$ 4.56 million. This clearly shows the strong diplomatic and economic ties that Bangladesh and Singapore enjoy.

We hope that the relationship between the two countries will continue to proliferate and further strengthen the bond for mutual sharing of socio-economic prosperity. The Bangladeshi entrepreneurs expect more investment from Singapore in the prospective sectors of Bangladesh.

THE KEY INVESTMENT SECTORS INCLUDE:

- **Jute goods** - In the year 2010-11 Bangladesh exported Jute product to the world market worth of US\$ 1.114 billion. 
- **Textiles Sector (Specialized and Home Textile)** - the fastest growing industry in Bangladesh along with RMG significantly contributing towards exports. Bangladesh is best placed in the region for textiles and garments because of available labor and trade status with the EU and USA. In the year 2010-11, we earned US\$ 953.31 million by exporting specialized and home textile products. 
- **Frozen Foods Sector** - Investment in frozen food sector with new technology and equipment has a vast potential for growth. 
- **Leather Sector** - Presently Bangladesh produces between 2-3% of the world's leather market. FDI in this sector along with the production of tanning chemicals stand to be highly rewarding. Government is in the process of setting up of separate Leather Zone relocating the existing industry sites to an well-organized place. 
- **Light Engineering Sector (LES)** - Export-oriented production in light industries has gained momentum in the past few years. Entrepreneurs from Hong Kong, Japan and Korea have taken advantage of Bangladesh's cheap and easily trainable labour

and its infrastructure facilities to manufacture products for the export market.

- **Pharmaceuticals** - After catering to the country's need, Pharmaceuticals from Bangladesh are now being exported to over 67 countries in Asia, Africa and Europe. In the year 2010-11 we earned US\$ 44.27 million by exporting pharmaceutical products. 
- **Energy (Power Generation and Transmission)** - In view of the gradual widening of supply gap and pursuant to the policy of privatisation the Government has recently opened the energy sector to private investment under Independent Power Producer (IPP) or PPP project. 
- **Telecommunication** - The recent revolution in IT on the telecommunication sector has opened up a new vista for private investment. This is a highly potential area due to a ready market of eager clients in the country. 
- **Agro-based Industries** - Major scope for increased cultivation of vegetables, tropical fruits, spices now grown in Bangladesh could feed agro-processing industries for both domestic and export markets. Floriculture can also be developed to meet export demand. 
- **Tourism** - Another highly potential sector for foreign investment. There is the longest sea beach in Bangladesh and many other historical and attractive natural places. 

Mission \$20 Billion export from knitwear sector by 2020

A K M SALIM OSMAN, PRESIDENT
BANGLADESH KNITWEAR MANUFACTURERS & EXPORTERS ASSOCIATION (BKMEA)

APPOSITE BUSINESS PLANNING IS FUNDAMENTAL FOR SHAPING UP BUSINESS STRENGTH. IT IS SHOWN THAT IN A WORLD OF DIVERSE BELIEFS, TO BE RATIONAL, A BELIEF MUST FLUCTUATE AROUND THE EMPIRICAL FREQUENCIES, GENERATING ENDOGENOUS AMPLIFICATION.

Market belief, which is the distribution of individual beliefs, is then observable via sampling. Traditional finance is built on the rationality paradigm. But if we view financial markets as complex evolutionary systems, we are bound to be rational in investment decisions and dependent upon market-forecasting heuristics.

Business is now a mechanism and so, we tend to think about prices and market beliefs to stand against any financial straits that may slacken off pace of the economy of the globe. Strategy choice should therefore be driven by evolutionary selection so that we could adopt strategies that meet expectations to real financial market with human subjects being discussed.

If we ponder over the evolution of Bangladesh Knitwear industry, we could see that our exporting concentration has been highly slanted towards two major markets: EU and USA. In EU, Germany is the main buyer followed by UK, France, Netherland and Italy. Besides, Bangladesh export to North America is largely to the USA, while to Canada it is only 2.3 percent. Market Dynamics provides a graphical system for measuring relative return versus risk for individual stocks to ensure improved

portfolio performance. The high concentration in a few markets is so risky and creates sluggishness in long term business opportunities.

Market diversification is so crucial for us and BKMEA has striven its best to occupy some potential markets across the globe that has remained untouched over the years due mostly to our inertia to get into new market. Statistically, the United States was the main export destination for Bangladeshi RMG products in the early 1990s followed by the European Union, but the European Union has surpassed the United States over time. This shift was very indicative in the areas of market selection, but willy-nilly we were unmindful of such digression of markets that could have taken us to new height of knitwear export, had we been able to turn to market selection and demand on time.

REALISM OF THE MISSION

Market dynamics, defined as the factors which affect the supply and demand of products in a market, are as important to economics as they are to practical business application. The characteristics of markets may importantly depend on how they are structured and operate. It is an established economics theory that the true science for market success is the

discovery of invariance principles and that the failure of economists to find such principles or to find equilibrium in markets that remain constant, is the greatest problem with economics. BKMEA has looked into the failures that have slowed down the pace of export of knitwear beyond the EU and the US, and surprisingly came to the understanding that our lethargy to go beyond the periphery of known destination and dearth of business intelligence and analytical research has compelled us to restrict ourselves to a very few markets—a tendency that would definitely cripple our economic pillar. This has spurred us to work for market expansion.

Our research has also revealed that some new destinations with really promising growth rates would bolster our economy and lessen our extreme dependency on EU market. Like in Latin America, South Africa, Russia, South Korea, Malaysia too hold a great potential in our market expansion planning. In 2010, the growth rate to Brazilian market was 10.71% whereas in 2008 it was 10.32%. The same was the case as had been evident in export to Mexican market. In 2010, the growth rate was 6.94% whereas it was only 3.41% back in 2007.

In Africa, we are landing in with strong footings. If the existing tax



system in the African continent can be tweaked and brought to our favor, the Bangladeshi knitwear items would catch on there in the shortest span of time. Russia is heralding to be the most “accessible and lucrative” market for us as our export growth is increasing day by day. We hope to make something really tangible in Russian market following its recent entry into WTO. Meanwhile, we have completed the ground work in Russia.

We had successful missions to Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates in 2010 and 2011. Our export to those countries is also increasing. Besides, our export to Australia, Malaysia and Singapore are really so inspiring. Like in 2007, our export growth in Australian market was only 0.54% and in 2010 it stood at 3.50% worth of \$ 74.96 million.

THE SCENARIO

The recent financial crises-- especially in Europe-- have grounds to make us worried. The economy of the developed countries directly influences the same of developing countries. The economic slow-down of Europe has resulted in the fall of purchasing capacity, which has brought forth a downgrade tendency in importing apparels from Bangladesh. This has served a great precaution note for

Bangladesh. In Germany, the single largest buyer of Bangladesh RMG in EU, we had a decline of 14.23% in September compared to the corresponding month of the previous year. Exports figure also dropped in France and Spain significantly. During the first quarter, the export earning stood at 296.43 million USD, a reduction of almost 6% compared to the first four months of the previous year.

In another scenario, EU is finalising its Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India and the individual ASEAN countries. Accordingly, in a few years (FTA comes into stage); Bangladesh will be leveled with its immediate competitors, except for China, in RMG exports to the EU. As a short term gain, the nation is likely to get some export orders from the European buyers who are willing to shift business from Sri Lanka, as the country recently lost its duty free status under GSP Plus. It is important to note that we have got duty-free access to India also. The country can be one of our biggest destinations.

While experiencing the negative impact in EU, the decision by the Turkish govt. on the ground of safeguard issue also hit hard Bangladesh RMG earnings. But we are in close discussion to minimize the negative effects of the safeguard duty. We are pursuing our case for duty-free access of our knitwear products into the USA. We are working with the government to give a strong presentation to the United States Trade Representative (USTR). We hope our successful presentation there will go a long way to achieve duty-free access in the US market.

STRENGTHS AND POSSIBILITIES

Increasingly, we see an evident shift in customer choices like the share of shirts in total garment exports from Bangladesh to the European Union has decreased, whereas the shares for overcoats, jackets, sweaters, suits and some other garment products have increased in recent years. In addition, a gender analysis indicates that Bangladesh has achieved some upgrading of its products recently in terms of exporting garment products to the European Union. Garments for females are treated as upgraded products compared with garments for males, since they add more value on average.

Over the years, we have yarn suppliers covering 75% of total yarn demanded by the industry whereas 90% of our knit fabrics are produced domestically. We also have competitive price and quality with unparalleled labor force in stitching skill. The unique grace of quality products have weaved the global community in a manner which is unfringeable.

Market dynamics means the factors that affect a market. From the theory of economics they would be supply, demand, price, quantity, and other specific terms. From a business standpoint, market dynamics are the factors that affect the business model which involves the applying party. For a prudent business, market dynamics are included in the market analysis of their business plan. These factors affect the business so much that it would be neglectful to exclude them. Market dynamics play an important role in the marketing plan of a business, though they may also play

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an important role in other areas such as cost of goods sold, distribution, logistics, and more. This is the most important area, we think; we do have to heavily work upon. If the business planning doesn't get along with market dynamics, it would fizzle through slowly, but steadily.

BKMEA'S RUSSIA TOUR

We maintain that Russia can be one of the most important destinations of Bangladesh knitwear which imported more than US\$ 2.5 billion in 2010-11 (Source: ITC Database). 50.17% of Russian import has been made from China.

We opine that once the Russian market is open for Bangladesh Knitwear, it will aggregate our market by around 20% along with EU market. In 2010, Bangladesh knitwear export to Russian Federation was USD 97.01 million marking the increase of 60.74% over the previous year. We can touch USD 600 million marks only in knitwear export in the next four to five years once we get GSP facilities in Russian market.

On the other hand, Russia can be benefitted equally by sourcing quality knitwear products at cheaper and competitive price. On October 02, 2011 BKMEA team made the maiden three day voyage to Russia Federation in an effort to promote knitwear export from Bangladesh following the recent successful mission to Japan. It is important to note that Russia is one of the potential and biggest markets which are still largely unexplored. Interestingly, till 1997 Bangladesh enjoyed Russian GSP facilities which are no longer available for the RMG sector. With a view to fostering the trade relations between the two countries, BKMEA trade delegation met with a number of government bodies and associations. Mainly these were the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation (CCI), Moscow Chamber of Commerce & industry, leading Russian retailer company Zolla, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Central Bank of Russian Federation, Federal Custom Service

of the Russian Federation. Following our visit to Russia, we think we have got to act in the following areas:

- There should be frequent interactions between the two countries both at business and government levels.
- We must be relentless in our efforts to pursue our case both at public and private forums between the two countries following Russia's into WTO;
- Our government should take the lead as we have already completed the groundwork to the end.

BKMEA'S JAPAN TOUR

In order to highlight the core strength, success story and the competitive prices of Bangladesh Knitwear, a BKMEA team made the historic visit to Japan on October 11, 2011. Here the team sought the relaxation of rules of origin to avail GSP benefit. On this point, the team was successful to raise similar voice from the Ministry of Economy, Trade and industry (METI) and from a large portion of the Japanese private bodies.

It could not be compensated with any available word that best describes the most gracious posture that the people of Japan and its government rendered to us by declaring the rules of origin to two stage to avail Japanese GSP for Bangladesh knitwear sector. All hard work finally culminated in the ultimate achievement – the relaxed rules of origin to avail Japanese GSP for Bangladesh knitwear products. Now we have two-stage GSP facilities for our knitwear products. We had also organized 6th Knit Exposition in Tokyo, Japan for the first time in the history of BKMEA just to introduce our quality products to Japanese importers—an initiative that has been highly acclaimed by the government

in general and brought benefit for the knitwear exporters in particular.

MARKET EXPANSION

In order to offset the export reduction in the EU and USA, soon we are going to dispatch our trade missions to South Africa, Malaysia, Australia and to the Latin American countries. Following the recent agreement between governments of Bangladesh and India, we hope soon India will be one of our major export destinations.

We acknowledge the government helps to the industry that we receive from time to time. However, we seek active supports specifically in the areas like the development of port and other physical infrastructure, smooth movement of utility supply, improved security systems. Besides, Bangladesh government can influence different regimes and countries with policy supports in attaining and maintaining preferential facilities as an LDC country. Bangladesh diplomatic missions in foreign countries may play a vital role in this regard.

CONCLUSION

I strongly believe that we have got to set a target if we want to move in the right direction. As a nation, we have set so many examples of accomplishments. Here \$ 20 billion target is not that much hard if we can align all our efforts to the mission. A good balance between market expansion and product diversification will sustain and enhance Bangladesh's position in the world market. However, I would once again reiterate my request to codify a unified set of compliance standards applicable for all buyers sourcing from Bangladesh not to cast adrift in international marketing strategy.



Attracting the Right Foreign Investments

MAJ. GEN. A T M SHAHIDUL ISLAM, NDU, PSC, EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN
BANGLADESH EXPORT PROCESSING ZONES AUTHORITY (BEPZA)

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IS ESSENTIAL IN ORDER TO REDUCE POVERTY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND TO IMPROVE PEOPLE'S LIVING STANDARDS. INVESTMENT PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF A COUNTRY.

The contribution of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is very significant especially in the underdeveloped and developing countries. Private sector provides bulk of employment and contributes to poverty alleviation.

Government of Bangladesh attaches great importance to the role of foreign investment in accelerating the pace of industrial development in Bangladesh. With this objective in view, the government promulgated Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority Act with the mandate to attract investment in the EPZs of Bangladesh. This EPZ Act provides for the legal, institutional and incentive framework for the EPZ program and the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority as the agency has been charged with the responsibility of administering the program to achieve economic objectives on behalf of the government.

EPZs are designed to further integrate Bangladesh into the global supply chain and attract export-oriented investments in the zones, thus achieving its economic objectives of job creation, diversification and expansion of exports, increasing productive investments, technology transfer and creation of backward linkages between the zones and the domestic economy.

Chittagong EPZ is the first Zone established by BEPZA. The Chittagong EPZ is the pioneer for investors which gradually turned Bangladesh as a "New Horizon for investment". Observing its astounding success, Dhaka EPZ came into operation in the year 1993. Afterwards 6 (six) new EPZs namely

Mongla, Comilla, Ishwardi, Uttara (Nilphamari), Adamjee & Karnaphuli have been set up and these EPZs have already started operation. Recently The Financial Times, a London based FDI magazine, has ranked Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) as the 3rd Best Cost Competitive Zone in the world and the 4th in the Best Economic Potential for 2010-11. (FDI Magazine of The Financial Times, London, June-July, 2010 issue).

MODE OF INVESTMENT

BEPZA pursues an open door policy in regards to foreign or local investment in its EPZs. It attracts investment in three categories, i.e:

- Type-A - Investment with 100% foreign ownership,
- Type-B - Joint venture between Bangladeshi and foreign investors
- Type-C - 100% Bangladeshi ownership.

INVESTMENT CLIMATE

1) GEO-REGIONAL LOCATION

The comparative advantages of the EPZ in Bangladesh are its homogenously, large number of potential human resources, competitive wage level, and its 'geo-regional location'. Bangladesh is situated in close proximity to the Bay of Bengal, which has given the country with an easy access to the world through sea-way and also by air in terms of import and export. As a result, the foreign investors are always keen to take those strategic advantages.

2) HUMAN RESOURCES

The main attraction of investment

in Bangladesh is the most inexpensive, productive, abundant and easily trainable workforce. Today Bangladesh has a growing number of managers, engineers, technicians and skilled labour force. The minimum wage of the workers in the EPZs is one of the lowest in Asia. Changing economic and political conditions in the Asian region are prompting many international investors to reassess their investment strategies and plan for relocating their investments in Bangladesh. Those changes are producing higher opportunities for Bangladesh to attract higher levels of FDI. China, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Philippines and even Vietnam, Indonesia & Malaysia are experiencing wages increase and rising production costs that are making them more expensive resulting the EPZs of Bangladesh have become a new field and place for foreign investment.

3) ONE WINDOW SERVICE

BEPZA has been providing "ONE WINDOW SERVICE" to its investors. Operational and documentation procedures have been framed to make them easy and simple with minimum formalities. Investors need only to deal with BEPZA for all of their investment and operational requirements. BEPZA assists the investors with everything like import, export, and subcontract permits etc. Apart from that, by providing on-site services such as customs clearance, logistics, international couriers, and offshore banking facilities, BEPZA provides its investors with the chance to further simplify business processes, resulting in a reduction in lead time. BEPZA

also provides same-day services to the investors.

4) INVESTMENT PROTECTION

Foreign investors enjoying multiple protections in BEPZA. The Foreign Private Investment (Promotion and Protection) Act secures all foreign investment in Bangladesh. As a member of OPIC's (Overseas Private Investment Corporation, USA) insurance and finance programmes operable in Bangladesh as well as in the EPZs. Bangladesh is a member of Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) which provides safeguards and security under international law. The International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Dispute (ICSID) also provides an additional means of remedy, whilst copyright interests are protected through World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). The World Bank has ranked Bangladesh 20th out of 187 nations for investors' protection, making it as the best in South Asian Region. (Doing Business, 2010).

5) FLEXIBILITY

BEPZA offers investment opportunities in convertible foreign currencies, providing investors with the flexibility of repatriating of both profit and capital. The investors also enjoy GSP facility in EU countries, USA, Australia, Japan, Norway and duty and quota free access to Canada.

6) INFRASTRUCTURE FACILITIES

BEPZA provides infrastructure facilities for the investors. BEPZA provides fully serviced plots and standard factory buildings for setting up manufacturing industry. Investor can use these plots under a 30 years lease which is renewable. Apart from these plots, an investor may also take

lease of Standard Factory Building (SFB) owned by BEPZA. All the utility connections such as electricity, water, internet & telecommunication are readily connected in the enterprises of the EPZs. BEPZA has also allowed setting up of hi-tech infrastructure facilities like

Central Effluent Treatment Plant, Water Treatment Plant, Inland Container Depot (ICD), Internet service, Power Generation Plant as service oriented industries in the EPZs.

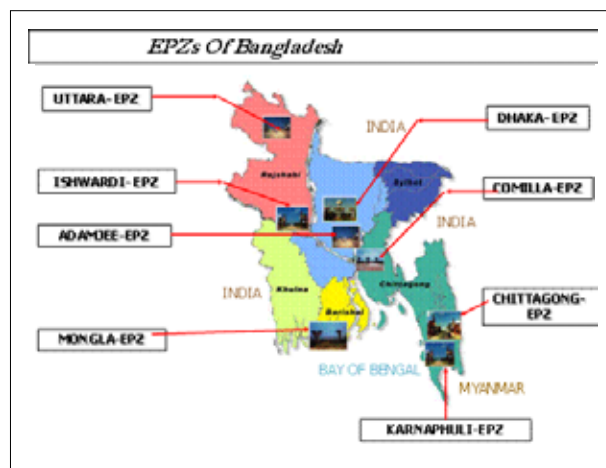
7) SUPPORT FACILITIES

BEPZA has allowed setting up of support service business facilities for the investors such as local and foreign banks, Off Shore Banking Units (OBU), insurance companies, C & F agents, freight forwarder and courier service in the EPZs. Other administrative facilities, such as Customs Office, Police Station, BEPZA's Security, Fire Station, Public Transport, Medical centers etc are available in the EPZs.

CONCLUSION

BEPZA has successfully traversed a long way of 28 years with a new dimension to increase the volume of

investment, diversification of export and thereby, employment generation and strengthening the economic base of Bangladesh. Apart from export earning objective, employment pattern shows that EPZs have been making significant contribution to the gradual empowerment of women which supports the objective of Millennium Development Goal (MDG). This financial and social empowerment of women has far reaching effect on the country's poverty reduction initiatives as the increasing number of young girls and women are joining the productive workforce of EPZs migrating from poverty prone remote rural areas of Bangladesh linking the rural economy with industrialization process. As a result of its outstanding success BEPZA has already got much recognition from the different parts of the world.




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Emerging Business Opportunities in Bangladesh

IN A RECENT SEMINAR CONDUCTED IN SINGAPORE, BANGLADESHI OFFICIALS AND BUSINESSMEN HIGHLIGHTED THE BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES IN BANGLADESH.



With a 'constant unbroken GDP growth', 7th largest population in the world and a recent Standard & Poor Sovereign Rating of BB-, opportunities abound in South Asia's investment destination, Bangladesh.

Keeping the exciting prospect of emerging business opportunities in mind, the International Enterprise (IE) Singapore and Bangladesh High Commission, Singapore jointly organised a seminar on March 8, 2012, at the Little Dot Seminar Room.

The seminar was well attended, where distinguished speakers spoke to a fully packed seminar room. The attendees were privileged to hear from Mr. Shaikh Md. Wahid-uz-Zaman, Principal Secretary to the Honourable Prime Minister of Bangladesh, who was the key speaker.

Mr. Zaman talked about Bangladesh's future growth and economic targets, like the medium-term target of 8% growth rate and the long-term target of raising the economy to the level of a middle-income country. He also mentioned

about the establishment of 'Public Private Partnership Programme' (PPP) office under the Prime Minister. Mr. Zaman further elaborated on the investment climate, reminding the participants that the Risk factors for FDI were the minimum in Bangladesh and Bangladesh had never posted negative economic growth, during the past 30 years.

The welcome address was given by Mr. Ryan Ang, Divisional Director of South Asia Group, IE Singapore followed by Mr. Vivek Chhabra, Vice Chairman South Asia Business Group, Singapore Business Federation, who cited Bangladesh as a 'great new opportunity, with China becoming expensive'.

The introductory speech was delivered by H.E. Kamrul Ahsan, the High Commissioner of Bangladesh, who began by thanking IE Singapore, for organising the seminar. He pointed out that though Bangladesh and Singapore have impressive business, investment and trade relations, there exists further potential for cooperation in the hospitality and service sector; tourism; light and medium Industry; agro-processing, pharmaceuticals and infrastructure.

Continuing on the same note, Ms Nihad Kabir, invited investments in to the 'fast maturing country' that was soon planning to be 'the new BRIC on the wall' (referring to the grouping acronym for emerging markets, Brazil, Russia, India and China). Ms Kabir, who is Vice-President of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), shared an overview of the

manufacturing sector. She made a special mention of the Bangladeshi ship builders who have turned from 'ship breakers to makers' and have order books over USD billion.

Coming from the shipping background himself was the next speaker, Capt. Sohail Hasan, President, Bangladesh Business Chamber of Singapore (BBCS) & CEO, Nobpac Shipping Pvt. Ltd. BBCS assists the Singapore investors by providing necessary information and support for doing business in Bangladesh.

Explaining the government's financial policies for foreign investors further was Mr. M.A. Quader Sarker, Member of Administration and Human Resource Management, National Board of Revenue. The esteemed speaker pointed out that Bangladesh tax-GDP ratio at 9.5% remains quite low when compared with other countries in South Asia.

Taking the podium next was the Commercial Director of Tiger Airways, Mr. Dave Perring who announced the Tiger's inaugural flight to Bangladesh on March 9 followed by Mr. Md. Zulfiqar Ali Siddique, National Operations Manager, DHL Express Bangladesh, who explained the Import and export custom regulations in Bangladesh.

Ms Irene Perven Badhan, Counsellor of Bangladesh High Commission gave 'Vote Of Thanks' which was followed by a 'Q&A' session and a 'Networking Session' thus bringing a productive and informative seminar to an end.



A FORCE TO DRIVE THE NATION TOWARDS ACHIEVEMENT

CAPT. SOHAIL HASAN, PRESIDENT
BANGLADESH BUSINESS CHAMBER OF SINGAPORE &
DIRECTOR, WESTERN MARINE SHIPYARD LIMITED

THE RECENT EURO CRISIS AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC TURMOIL AT LARGE HAVE FORCED THE CONSISTENTLY STRONG ECONOMIES IN THE WORLD TO TREMBLE. THE IMPACT OF GLOBAL RECESSION HAS EVEN REACHED DEVELOPING NATION LIKE BANGLADESH BUT FORTUNATELY SUCH INFINITESIMAL ECONOMY IN THE GLOBE IS SOMEHOW PULLING ON TO SURVIVE ONLY BECAUSE OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF FEW FOREIGN CURRENCY EARNING INDUSTRIES.



future the ship-owners started placing orders for building of super-ships to replace ageing fleet of redundant vessels. The traditional shipbuilding nations like South Korea and China focused on building large ships. Even Vietnam, which is relatively new in shipbuilding, is no longer interested to build small ships below 25,000 DWT. They want to build bigger vessels because it is relatively cheaper and requires less labour per DWT. Their unwillingness has made Bangladesh, a new destinations for small shipbuilding paving an opportunity to grab and grow rapidly to make a position in the globe as a shipbuilding nation.

The nascent shipbuilding industry of Bangladesh is a major example of it. It has brought light of hope into our nation in the past few years. Despite the deepening global financial crisis and gradual erosion of consumer confidence, the shipbuilding industry in Bangladesh is experiencing a surge in new business orders. Today it has become the reason for mass employment, poverty reduction & generation of our foreign currency reserve. Statistics say that if this sector can secure shipbuilding orders worth US\$ 2 billion, our national GDP will rise by 1-2% by 2015. Till today Bangladesh has already bagged export orders for building 42 ships worth US\$ 0.6+ B. This can go up to US\$ 2 billion if we succeed in maintaining our present momentum despite the worldwide economical turmoil.

EMERGENCE OF BANGLADESH AS SHIPBUILDING NATION

In the recent past the demand for medium and small size vessels has increased in an unexceptional manner. This is due to the booming concept of global village, which is considered to be more efficient & cost effective all over the world. The ship-owner living in this global village prefers smaller vessels for transporting goods within short distance rather using bulk carriers. Another study providing reference of various statistical report & new maritime rules showed that about 1000s of ocean-going vessels will be demolished & declared unfit for sea voyage by 2015 due to up-gradation of maritime safety compliances. An additional 10,000 vessels will be required by 2020 to replace those vessels and the demand will keep on growing. To meet such crisis in the

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Although, the ship-owners are looking for emerging shipbuilders all over the world but Bangladesh is an attractive location for them. Bangladesh has lots of competitive advantages on other competing shipbuilding nations. First of all Bangladesh has wide coastlines offering opportunity for rapid development and contribution to international shipbuilding industry.

The availability of (skilled) manpower is an important factor in determining the competitiveness of the shipbuilding industry. Fortunately, Bangladeshi workforce is acclaimed to be disciplined, diligent, hard working, obedient and quick learner and comparatively cheaper than any other country in the world.

Lastly, unlike emerging shipyards in other nations Bangladeshi shipyards have Quality Management System (QMS), & they follow international shipbuilding practice as per latest IMO regulations. These factors have ensured a promising future of Bangladesh in the global shipbuilding market.

COST ADVANTAGE

Labor wages have a major impact on the competitiveness of a shipyard: labor accounts for a large part of the costs of a ship. Labor cost is definitely a cost advantage for the Bangladesh shipbuilding industry as other shipbuilding nations does not have such quality workers at such a reasonable price. This is only due to the low living cost in Bangladesh. This competitive price advantage gained from plentiful cheap labor plays a significant role in the lifecycle development of shipbuilding industry and it will likely to continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

Apart, the utility cost and cost of land is cheaper in Bangladesh comparative to other shipbuilding nations which has lead shipbuilding cost much effective in Bangladesh. A study conducted by the Danish embassy, the shipbuilding sector expert said Bangladesh can build ships at a cost 15 percent lesser than other countries

DEMAND FOR INLAND AND COASTAL VESSELS IN THE DOMESTIC MARKET

Domestic shipbuilding is another potential sector and the market is worth of approx US\$ 300 million. Bangladesh being a developing nation

Bangladeshi workforce is acclaimed to be disciplined, diligent, hard working, obedient and quick learners and comparatively cheaper than any other country in the world

currently the govt highly emphasizes on capacity build up. For instance the ports in Bangladesh have plans to increase their capacity for more revenue. And this will require various types of ships for ports' capacity build up including pilot vessels, tugs, workboats, mooring boats, various specialized boats, dredgers and many more. The ports have already placed newbuilding orders of such boats in the local shipbuilding industry and more work orders are being issued.

Secondly due to traffic congestion in the highways of Bangladesh the government intends to switch the road traffic to the river ways. This year our sea ports have received around 30 million tons of bulk cargo and 12 lakh TEU's containers, which is in increase at 20% per annum. Most these cargos and all the containers are shifted in various parts of the nation by roads & railway making traffic congestion. Due to increased trade & globalization we are receiving more cargos and containers which are making our roads more overloaded. If this overload is switched to waterways traffic congestion will come to a control. Hence we need inland

cargo carriers, container carriers & passenger carriers, dredgers.

Another reason for increased demand of ships is establishment of fuel generated power plants in different parts of the nation. This will require inland tankers to carry fuels which could be facilitated by the domestic shipbuilding industry. Local shipyards in the country have received newbuilding orders of few tankers & more in the pipeline.

POOL OF SKILLED WORKFORCE IN THE COUNTRY

The workers of shipbuilding industry are readily available in Bangladesh and sufficient to meet the growing market demand. This industry requires workers of various skills including welders, electricians, grinders, fitters, construction workers, machine operators and many others.

Workers of Bangladesh are considered very much expert in such jobs for their intense and sophisticated hand skills, which mainly includes welding. Definitely this requires training which is provided in numerous institutes recently developed in various parts



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of the nation to train workers. These workers are later consumed by the local shipbuilding industry for demand of such people. Besides lots of Bangladeshi workers are working in shipyards & other heavy construction industries abroad. Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), has been producing Naval Architect and Marine Engineers since 1974. Chittagong Marine Academy has been producing entrant marine engineers and captains. Apart from those quite a few universities and institutions are producing engineering graduates. But more than 50% of BUET produced graduate naval architects and marine engineers have been working abroad and about 60% of them in shipyards. In Singapore, more than 30% engineers and workers are from Bangladesh in shipbuilding and ship repair. In Dubai and in shipyards in the Persian Gulf, Bangladeshi workers represent more than 20% of the total workforce. Shipbuilding engineers and workers from Bangladesh are engaged in countries like USA, Australia and Canada and numbers are increasing. Developments of shipbuilding industry in Bangladesh have started attracting these expatriates return to Bangladesh to accelerate faster healthy growth of shipbuilding in the country and add value to the nation's development.

MARKET SHARE DISTRIBUTION

New shipyards are being established to meet the huge shipbuilding demand for the local and foreign clients. Currently the few existing shipyards in the country are not sufficient to grab a big portion of the market but the number of yards is growing very fast.

At the moment there are about five major shipyards in the country who are dominating the market. Other shipyards are in talks with foreign buyer to receive orders. "Western Marine Shipyard" is known as the leading yard in the country. Beside Western Marine the major players are "Ananda Shipyard & Slipways", "Khan Brothers Ltd", "Karnaphully shipbuilders", "Khulna Shipyard", "Narayangonj Engineering & Shipbuilder Ltd", etc.

FUTURE PROSPECT OF SHIP BUILDING INDUSTRY

The country's shipbuilding industry would become the third largest foreign exchange earner in less than ten years. The government has already granted the industry a partial green channel status. In terms of the current provisions no customs duties are payable on imports of raw materials and components for use in shipbuilding. Granting full green channel status to export-oriented shipbuilders will not place any additional burden to the government, but will save the industry 0.9 per cent of the contract value.

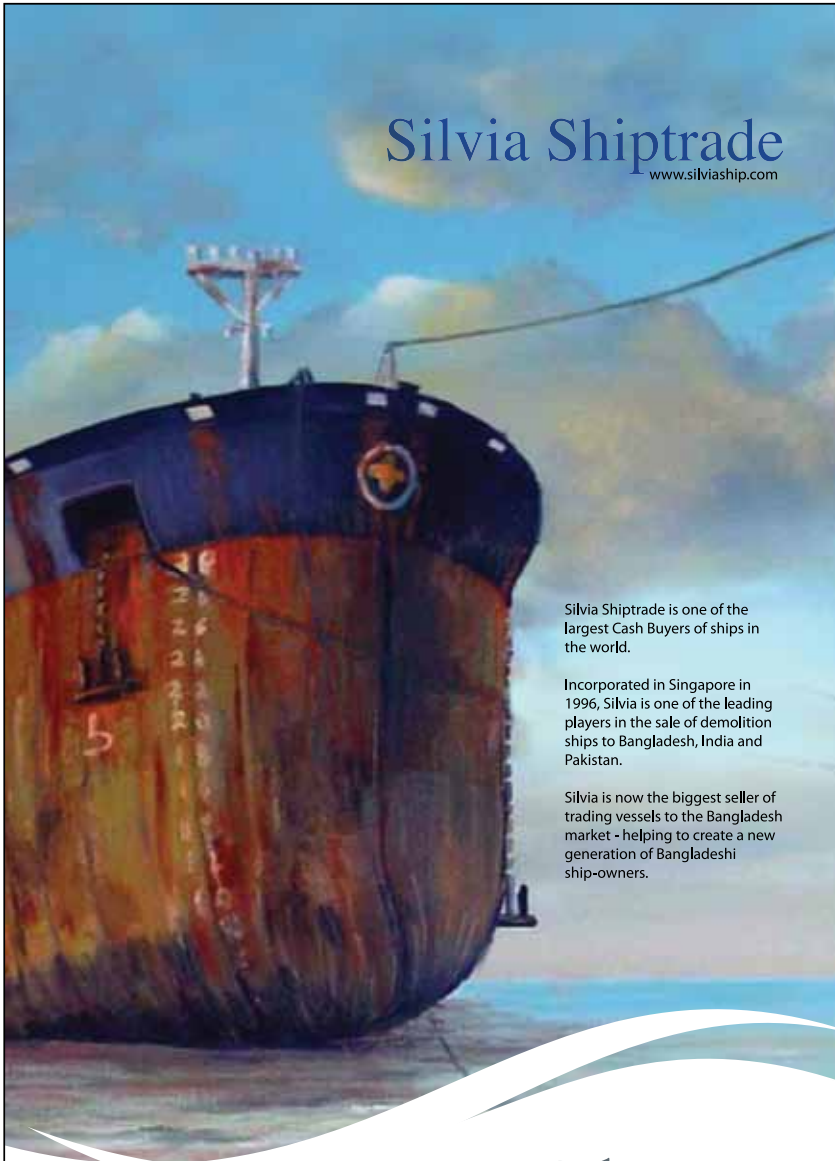
Currently ship builders have to import virtually all materials required, which constitutes nearly 65%. If a contract for

shipbuilding is worth US\$28 million, material imports constitute around US\$ 18.2 million. Regardless the current economic down-turn, it seems like Bangladesh has enormous amount of opportunity to play a big role by facilitating backward linkage industries for flourishing the industry.

It is only a matter of time that Bangladesh emerges as a major hub for building small ocean-going ships. Bangladesh would be able to grab one per cent of the global order for small ships in coming years and it will fetch US\$4.0 billion for Bangladeshi shipbuilding industries.

CONCLUSION

Bangladesh has all the ingredients for labour intensive shipbuilding and allied industries. With the encouragement of Government, dynamic entrepreneurship, infrastructural advantages shipbuilding may take the lead and stand out as the flagship sector of our economy. Soon, Bangladesh will enjoy the ripple effect of shipbuilding in the form of expansion in heavy industries. A change in lives of our people, through industrial employment generation, is expected and inevitable.



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A Revealing Journey across Bangladesh

RELIGIOUS SITES AND RITUALS

MD. RASHEDUJJAMAN, FIRST SECRETARY
BANGLADESH HIGH COMMISSION, SINGAPORE

WHEN IT COMES TO TRAVELLING AROUND BANGLADESH, NO ONE WOULD PREFER TO MISS A TRIP TO THE WORLD'S LONGEST UNBROKEN SEA BEACH IN COX'S BAZAR OR THE LARGEST MANGROVE FOREST, THE SUNDARBANS - THE TWO MOST PROMINENT FEATURES OF THIS LAND OF NATURAL EXTRAVAGANZA. FOR HER OWN BLEND OF LUSH GREEN HILLY AREAS, BEACHES AND DEEP FORESTS, COUPLED WITH SPECTACULAR ANCIENT RELICS, MAN-MADE WONDERS AND FAIRS AND FESTIVITIES, BANGLADESH IS EVOLVING INTO A CHARMING TOURIST DESTINATION FOR EVERY TASTE.

But, the country's uniqueness of having a vast array of historic places of worship, establishments, relics and rituals of all major religions – be it Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism or Christianity – perhaps received less hype.

There are mosques, shrines, temples, churches and ancient Buddhist Viharas spread all over Bangladesh bearing testimony to her rich and diverse history of civilization and inter-faith coexistence.

The intriguing past of Bangladesh, which was part of ancient Bengal, saw regimes of several dynastic rulers and emperors as well as endeavours of religious preachers, merchants, business traders and missionaries for their settling in. At some point of time or other, they disappeared but left their marks in the shape of magnificent cities, monuments and relics of their religious stands.

It is an interesting paradox that

Bangladesh, currently an overwhelming Muslim-majority country, conceived and cradled Buddhism only a thousand years back.

The religion was first prominently established during the Mauryan King Asoka the Great, as early as 3rd century BC in the present-day Bangladesh, which came under his vast empire.

But, Buddhism in Bengal perhaps witnessed its most glorious era between 7th to 12th century AD under the royal patronage of the Pala Dynasty rulers. Bengal became the main centre of Buddhism as well as secular learning and flourished with many monasteries and religious centres like *Somapura Mahavihara* and *Shalban Vihara* and



Relics of the Somapura Mahavihara, Naogon district.

universities like *Nalanda* (Bihar, India) and *Paharpur*. Monks and students from far and near came to study Buddhism, philosophy, astronomy and other fields of knowledge under the supervision of eminent Bengali monk-scholars.

One of the most notable Pala period developments stands in the village of Paharpur, near Rajshahi, a north-western district of Bangladesh, is well known for being South Asia's largest Buddhist monastery.

Known as *Somapura Mahavihara*, this UNESCO World Heritage Site was a renowned intellectual centre of learning and study of Buddhism. It is believed that *Atish Dipankar*, who was credited for promoting Buddhism in Tibet, and other renowned disciples of Lord Buddha stayed here for many years for preaching.

A must visit place, the site of *Somapura Mahavihara* still holds its unique layout and the decoration of carved stones and terracotta plaques reflecting the structure's religious function.

At Mainamati, a place in the south-eastern district Comilla, there lies at least 50 Vihara sites that speak of an astonishing extent of Buddhist remains in the country.

Mainamati's uniqueness is in its being a complex of religious establishments – monasteries, temples and stupas – extending over miles on the hill-top. Close to the site is the *Salban Vihara*, which is a Buddhist monastery and an unparalleled group of Buddhist brick monuments known as the *Kutila Mura* – are its unique features.

Recent archaeological evidences found at Wari Bateshwar, only 75 km from the Capital Dhaka, is yet another tangible remains of the great Buddhist culture dating back to the earliest years of the religion.



Kantajee Temple with its unique terracotta embellishments, Dinajpur.

Besides, there are still many places to visit and see of the past and present of Buddhism in Bangladesh.

The largest Buddhist temple of the country, located atop a hill near the hill tracts town Bandarban, is locally known as *Swarna Mandir* (Golden Temple).

This beautifully decorated temple houses Lord Buddha's *Dhatu* (material remains of a holy person) and has attracted pilgrims and travellers from all over the world since its inauguration in 2000.

The *Aggameda Khyang*, a famous Buddhist monastery having Burmese architecture, is situated near the entrance of the Cox's Bazar, the tourist capital of Bangladesh. Set in an elevated structure made of round timber columns, the monastery seems to be beautifully hiding under the cover of lots of trees in a hilly backdrop.

It is not only a Buddhist sanctuary but also an active monastery where regular prayers are held and various Buddhist

festivals are celebrated. Not far from Cox's Bazar, Ramu is a famous Buddhist village with an excellent charm of its own.

The best attraction is however, the huge thirteen feet bronze statue of Buddha, the biggest of the Buddha images hitherto discovered in Bangladesh and the eye-catching Buddhist temple near Baakkhali on Tiger canal.

The Buddhist monastery in Chittagong has been preserving two pieces of rare and sacred *Keshu Dhatu* (hair relic said to have belonged to the Lord Buddha), which are displayed on special occasions.

Hinduism in Bangladesh is nearly as old as the country's known history. The imperial Gupta monarchs, who reigned from the early 4th to the late 6th century, embraced Brahmanism.

The Gupta rule generated an atmosphere of Hindu-Buddhist amity and co-existence that continued till the end of Pala period.

The advent of Sena Dynasty towards the end of 12th century brought a period of revival in Hinduism in Bengal. Before embracing Islam by the majority of the population in Bengal, particularly in East Bengal or present day Bangladesh, which began in the early 13th century, Hinduism remained as the dominant religion.

A large number of Hindu temples, relics and places of pilgrimage across the country reminds of the rule of Hindu dynasties and their devotion and zest for the religion.

There are mosques, shrines, temples, churches and ancient Buddhist Viharas spread all over Bangladesh bearing testimony to her rich and diverse history of civilization and inter-faith coexistence.

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The most impressive Hindu monument in Bangladesh, *Kantajee Temple*, was built in 1752 AD by Maharaja Pran Nath. Located in the graceful heart of Dinajpur, a northern district of Bangladesh, this baked clay reddish-brown temple boasts one of the greatest examples on terracotta architecture in Bangladesh.

The temple is dedicated to Hindu *Lord Vishnu* and considered to be a religious site for the devotees. The old epic stories from *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and contemporary social events were engraved exquisitely on the terracotta walls.

In the nearby Bogra town, the oldest archaeological site in Bangladesh *Mahasthangarh* was the capital of various kingdoms in the region including the Maurya, Gupta and the Sen Dynasty. The site, overlooking the river Karatoa, is worth a visit for its picturesque landmarks and historical importance.

Langalbandh is another Hindu holy place famed for sacred bath on the occasion of *Astami Snan* during mid-April every year. The place is situated 20 km to the south-east of Dhaka city, on the bank of river Brahmaputra. Thousands of devotees assemble there annually to take the holy dip, which they believe will absolve them of all sins and distresses.

Located about 37 km away

from the port city Chittagong and connected conveniently to the Dhaka-Chittagong highway, Sitakundu is considered to be a sacred place both for Hindus and Buddhists.

The hill-top *Chandranath Temple*, where the right arm of Hindu Goddess Sati is believed to have fallen, and a Buddhist temple having foot print of Lord Buddha are the famous places for the followers of both the religions.

The name of the place itself belongs to the myth that King Rama, the central character of 'the Ramayana', and his wife *Sita* once visited this place during their exile. Thousands of pilgrims assemble for the *Siva-chaturdashi* festival, which is held annually, to express their devotion and visit this magnificent place of natural beauty.

Although Islam is believed to have arrived in Bengal with Muslim Arab traders in the mid 7th century, Sufi missionaries and subsequent Muslim conquests actually helped its spread throughout the region.

Sufis (practitioners of Sufism, a mystical form of Islam) and Muslim Saints, arrived as early as mid 11th century from Yemen, Iraq, Iran, Central Asia and north India, perhaps played the most significant role and greatly influenced religious life of the people of Bengal.

From the 13th to 15th century, the Muslim rule saw rapid increase

in their strength. However, with the advent of Mughals by the middle of the 16th century, the age of Islam had truly arrived in Bangladesh.

No wonder Bangladesh has innumerable mosques all over as majority of its 150 million people being Muslims. Of those mosques, many are reminiscent of the era of Muslim domination in Bengal and reflection of elegant taste of the rulers and preachers.

Shat Gambuj (sixty domes) Mosque is one of those Islamic monuments standing majestically in the southern district Bagerhat, on the edge of the Sundarbans. This 15th century edifice was built by a Turkish General *Ulugh Khan Jahan*, who is revered as one of the earliest Islamic missionaries in Bengal, in an outstanding architectural ensemble of Islamic monuments called 'Mosque City'.

For exceptional number of mosques and their imposing beauty, the place is rated by UNESCO as one of the World Heritage Sites.

The fascinating *Lalbagh Fort* in the Dhaka city is a noteworthy Mughal monument that reminds of the glorious episode of Muslim supremacy in this region.

The most impressive amongst the three prominent features that accentuate the beauty of this place is the *Tomb of Bibi Pari*. Other two are the three-domed *Quilla Mosque* and the *Dewan-i-Aam*, a double storey imposing building and was essentially the Headquarters.

All these monuments are mostly surrounded by beautiful gardens offering the visitors a great time.

The art and skills of Muslim era are visible in many other beautiful mosques across the country – some, of course, will grab attention.

The immaculate *Tara Masjid* (star mosque) in the capital Dhaka boasts excellent decorative works with motifs of blue stars and Arabic calligraphic writing. *Saat Masjid* in Mohammapur area of the capital is another relic of Mughal architecture in Bangladesh.

This 300-year old mosque was built by Mughal General Shaista Khan. *Bagha Mosque* in Rajshahi is well known for its ornate terracotta



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ornamentation. *Chota Sona Masjid* (small golden mosque) in the same district speaks of the architectural excellence of Muslim age. *Atia Mosque* in Tangail, near Dhaka, is an example of superb craftsmanship that blends harmoniously both the Sultanate and Mughal features of Bengal architecture.

A number of Shrines spread across the country are the evidences of imposing influence of *Sufi* missionaries and early preachers of Islam in Bengal.

These Shrines are considered to be holy places even by the people from other faiths and are visited throughout the year. The *Shrine of Hazrat Shah Jalal (RA)* in the city-heart of Sylhet is a favourite haunt for people of various caste and creed. This historical relic was built in the memory the saint Hazrat Shah Jalal (RA), the protagonist of the Muslim conquest of Sylhet. The *Shrine of Sultan Biazid Bostami (RA)* in Chittagong, where the great saint is believed to have visited about 1,100 years ago, is an object of veneration to the devotees.

Within a stone's throw, the *Shrine of Hazrat Shah Amanat (RA)* presents a unique site for the believers of all faith. The *Shrine of Hazrat Shah Mokhdum (RA)* in the city of Rajshahi is must-visit place for its grace and elegance.

Every year thousands of his followers assemble there to perform his *Urs* (death anniversary) and celebrate *Ashura Mela* (fair to commemorate, 10th day of Muharram in the Islamic calendar) in utmost sanctity.

With the world's fourth biggest Muslim population, Bangladesh is a place where Islam is well-tended. Islamic rites and rituals are performed round the year in a mood of festivity.

The grandeur of the national mosque – *Baitul Mukarram* – attracts large number of devout Muslims to offer their prayers, especially during the month of Ramadan and other important days of Muslim calendar.

Located at the heart of Dhaka city and having a capacity of 30,000 people, this modern-day architecture is considered to be the 10th biggest mosque of the world. Bangladesh also proudly hosts



Armenian Church.

Bishwa Ijtema (world congregation) for the devoted Muslims from all over the world, near the capital city.

This three-day annual event is now the second largest gathering of Muslims after the Holy Hajj at Mecca, where prayer is held for the spiritual adulation and welfare of the Muslims.

Although the Christians in Bangladesh currently constitute relatively smaller part of population, they have earned much reputation for their contribution in the fields of education and works of mercy, including health services for all – especially the poor, underprivileged, and helpless. The country has a good number of churches - many are quite active- making their presence felt right from the late 16th century when Christianity arrived here initially through Portuguese and later by English colonials.

One of the best preserved and enduring of the lot is the famous *Armenian Church*, reminds passers-by of the enthralling presence of the somewhat elusive Armenians in Bengal.

A Diaspora of highly educated trading people, Armenians built this church at Armanitolal - a neighbourhood in Dhaka named after them - as a dedication to their unique strand of Christian faith.

With memorials, statue and tranquil

surrounding, it is a place simply worth visiting. *St. Mary's Cathedral and Church of Bangladesh* (former Holy Rosary Church), both located in Dhaka, are two other prominent churches amongst the tangible features of Christian presence in Bangladesh.

There are few *Gurdwaras* (place of worship of Sikhs) in different parts of Bangladesh holding truth of country's diverse past. The *Gurdwara Nanak Shahi*, situated in the Dhaka University campus, is the most notable one, much frequented by devotees and foreign visitors.

In her thousands years of colourful history, Bangladesh had embraced nearly all the major faiths that engendered religious tolerance in the society.

Here religious rituals and festivals take place in a cordial atmosphere. The co-existence of religious relics, sites, monuments and mausoleum – of past and present - is the testament to the amity among people of all religions.

A visit to these traces across the country will satisfy your craving for charm, provoke your thought and most importantly, connect you spiritually with fellow followers from earliest days.

With extraordinary hospitable locals, affordable quality accommodation and easy access to these sites, Bangladesh is eager to welcome you. Just come and explore - lest you miss something.



Bangladesh Language and Cultural Foundation

BLCF was formed in December, 2000 with the objective of promoting the language and culture of Bangladesh to the people living in Singapore. The culture of a people and nation is largely carried by its language and hence, from the outset, the BLCF laid emphasis on inculcating the new generation of children and students of Bangladeshi origin with Bangla language.

As we look towards the future, we are committed to make our Bangla language school achieve even greater heights. We also hope to diversify our efforts at promoting the language and culture of Bangladesh to other domains of activity, with special emphasis on the bringing the rich 2,000 years of cultural and historical heritage of Bangladesh to the people in Singapore.



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STATE OF ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

A New Dimension in Investment Attractiveness of Bangladesh

DR. SHAMSUZZAMAN FAROOQ, PROFESSOR
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While these attributes are important indicators of a desirable environment for foreign investment, the knowledge base of the workforce in the country, crucial for gradually diversifying from the current labor intensive manufacturing to higher value added options, is seldom highlighted.

In this context, the state of education, particularly engineering and technological education, in Bangladesh is reviewed in this article.

The education system in Bangladesh is well structured in four tiers, primary (grades 1-5), secondary (grades 6-10), higher secondary (grades 11-12) and tertiary.

A small number of private English medium schools in main urban centers offer O- and A-level, and International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum. Historically, there have been two public examinations, Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination following completion of grade 10 and Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examination at the end of grade 12.

However, in order to reduce the disparity in content exposure intra-regionally, improve quality of education by identifying strengths and weaknesses of the students and identify talents, a country wide common public examination at the primary level, Primary Education Terminal Examination, has been introduced after grade 5 since 2009.

A similar common public examination, Junior Secondary Certificate (JSC) examination, at the end of grade 8 was introduced in 2010.

Post-primary (secondary) education in Bangladesh offers three options, General, Madrasah, and Technical and Vocational Education Systems.

The mainstream general education system branches into humanities, business and science tracks in grade 9. At this level, the distribution of students in science track is 51.5 % in the public schools, whereas in the private schools 47.9% students undertake humanities track.

At the higher secondary (college) level, 1.38 million students are enrolled in grades 11 and 12 in over 3100 colleges. The distribution of students in the three tracks is similar to the secondary level.

Madrasah education is the equivalent of the general education system with emphasis on Islamic education. Blending madrasah education with mainstream contents has helped maintain religious harmony in a Muslim majority country and promote moderate Islamic views in the society.

The technical and vocational education system comes under the purview of the Bangladesh Technical Education Board which administers vocational SSC and HSC programmes. It also offers 3-4 year diploma courses and conducts many other certificate courses. Nearly 3000 public and private

institutions are providing vocational education to 0.5 million students.

A wide range of options are available at the tertiary level. Over 1500 mainstream colleges offer Bachelor's and Master's degrees by coursework to over 1 million students.

These are affiliated to Bangladesh National University established in 1992. Strong local and overseas employment and higher education opportunities make university education a popular choice among the students.

In Bangladesh, currently there are 32 public, 55 private and two international universities. The universities are regulated by the University Grants Commission. The public universities offer various undergraduate and postgraduate coursework based and research based programmes including doctor of philosophy (PhD) degrees. 19 public and 47 private medical colleges and one private university offer 5-year MBBS programs.

Bangladeshi doctors work in medical practices in USA, UK, Australia and New Zealand in large numbers which is indeed a testimony to the quality of our medical education. Current student enrolment figures in the public and private universities are 0.185 million and 0.202 million, respectively. Nearly 60% of the public universities are dedicated to science, engineering and technology education catering to 31% of the students.

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Abundant educated workforce with local and overseas experience makes Bangladesh a land of untapped opportunities for foreign investment.

In contrast, 12% of the private and international universities offer programmes in science, engineering and technology to about 10% of their students. The universities offer extensive programs in various other subjects including liberal arts, business, physical and life sciences, law etc. Increasingly more universities are offering programs in engineering and technology.

Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) is regarded as the best institution for technology education in Bangladesh. Sixty years of engineering education at BUET and its predecessor institutes was celebrated in 2007.

Today, over 1000 students are annually enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate programs in engineering, architecture, planning and postgraduate programs in natural sciences offered by fifteen departments, and several research institutes and centers.

BUET graduates, over 25,000 to date, besides contributing in all spheres of national development including the expansion of engineering education in the country, are also well placed in industry and academia all over the world in developed and developing economies alike.

The highly qualified faculty members offer consultancy services to the local industries and international development agencies.

Recognising the quality control need arising from a rapid increase in the number of institutions granting degrees in engineering, the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) has established Board of Accreditation for Engineering and Technical Education (BAETE) and

Bangladesh Professional Engineers Registration Board (BPERB).

BAETE is an autonomous arm of IEB that operates according to international practices to review and grant accreditation to the undergraduate programs in engineering offered by institutions of higher learning.

BPERB is a similar autonomous arm of IEB that grants professional registration to qualified engineers with degrees from BAETE accredited degree programs. BAETE is a provisional signatory of the Washington Accord. BPERB is a provisional member of the Engineers Mobility Forum. Washington Accord and Engineers Mobility Forum are two (out of six) international agreements governing mutual recognition of engineering qualifications and professional competence.

Our education system is not without flaws, but there are clearly identifiable strengths. The fast pace of growth in the education sector dominated by private initiatives in the last 20 years indicates a significant shift in the public mindset.

Another positive development is

an appropriate framework with built-in quality control measures which is also emerging to regulate the vast educational landscape.

These measures are currently limited to the pre-university levels. We are in a good position to pioneer some form of accreditation or leveling measures for the main stream undergraduate tertiary programs similar to that undertaken for the engineering education. The country is branded as a destination for affordable labour intensive low value added manufacturing. The focus is seldom on the current state of science, engineering and technology education in Bangladesh discussed in this article.

The large number of Bangladeshi Diaspora working overseas in various fields of science, engineering and technology, mostly graduates from the local public universities followed by advanced overseas education and training, is another significant talent pool ready to contribute to the national development if appropriate opportunities are made available.

These are the unexplored strengths that should be attractive to the foreign investors as their next destination for setting up or relocating value-added manufacturing. Vast opportunities also exist for social business in science, engineering and technology education, renewable energy, water treatment and public health.

Abundant educated workforce with local and overseas experience makes Bangladesh a land of untapped opportunities for foreign investment.




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Bangladesh Foreign Minister HE Dr. Dipu Moni, MP meets Singapore Foreign Minister HE K Shanmugam at the Singapore Foreign Office, June 4, 2011



Hon'ble Foreign Minister HE Dr. Dipu Moni, MP presents a gift to Singapore Foreign Minister HE K Shanmugam, June 4, 2011



HE Advocate Shahara Khatun, MP Hon'able Minister for Home Affairs formally inaugurates the MRP system at the Bangladesh High Commission, April 11, 2011



HE Kamrul Ahsan receives Guest of Honour HE Ho Peng Kee, Hon'ble Senior Minister of State of Singapore at Bangladesh National and Independence Day Reception 2011



HE Kamrul Ahsan receives Hon'able Members of Parliament Mr. Charles Chong and Dr Ong Se Hong at Bangladesh National and Independence Day Reception 2011



Guests at Bangladesh National and Independence Day Reception 2011



HE Kamrul Ahsan and Mrs Ahsan with the Guest of Honour and MPs at Bangladesh National Day Reception 2011



Guests at Bangla New Year programme organised by the High Commission at Fort Canning Park, April 17, 2011



HE Kamrul Ahsan addresses the Bangladesh community at the Bangla New Year programme organised by the High Commission at Fort Canning Park, April 17, 2011



Winners of the art and essay competition organised on the occasion of the birthday of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman



Artists performing at Bangla New Year programme at the High Commission, May 28, 2011



Mrs. Saira Nazneen Ahsan gives prize to one of the participants at Bangla New Year programme at the High Commission, May 28, 2011



HE Kamrul Ahsan delivering his acceptance speech as the Dean of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps of Singapore, June 17, 2011



HE Kamrul Ahsan, The Dean of Diplomatic Consular Corps and Mrs. Ahsan bidding farewell to the outgoing Ambassadors and Their spouses, June 17, 2011



Commanding Officer BNS Dhaleshwai Capt Mohammad Nazmul Karim receives HE Kamrul Ahsan on the Naval Ship at Changi Naval Base, Singapore, December 14, 2011



HE Kamrul Ahsan addresses the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, January 19, 2012



Artists performing at the function organised by the High Commission on the occasion of International Mother Language Day, February 21, 2012



Guests at the function organised by the High Commission on the occasion of International Mother Language Day, February 21, 2012



Principal Secretary to the Hon'ble Prime Minister Mr. Shaikh Md. Wahid-uz-Zaman addresses the Q&A session at the Bangladesh Investment Seminar, March 8, 2012



Participants at the Bangladesh Investment Seminar at IE Singapore, March 8, 2012

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People's Republic of Bangladesh

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

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AREA & POPULATION

147,570 sq km & 152 million (est)

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

75.42 million

ECONOMY

Unit of Currency: Taka (Tk)

(US\$ 1 - Appx. 81.75 Taka)

GDP (PPP): US\$282.5 billion

GDP per Capita: US\$1,700 (PPP)

Forex Reserve: 9.634billion

Industrial Growth: 7.4 percent

Investment Rate: 23.3 percent of GDP

National Savings Rate: 29.15 percent of GDP

Exports (US\$) in 2011: US\$ 23.86billion

Imports (US\$) in 2010: US\$ 31.75billion

*All data are of 2011 (est)

SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF GDP

Agriculture: 18.4 percent

Industry: 28.6 percent

Services: 53 percent

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, 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, Ships, 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, Shipbuilding, etc

*Our Warm Wishes
to
Bangladesh*

*For
41st Anniversary of
Independence*



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