

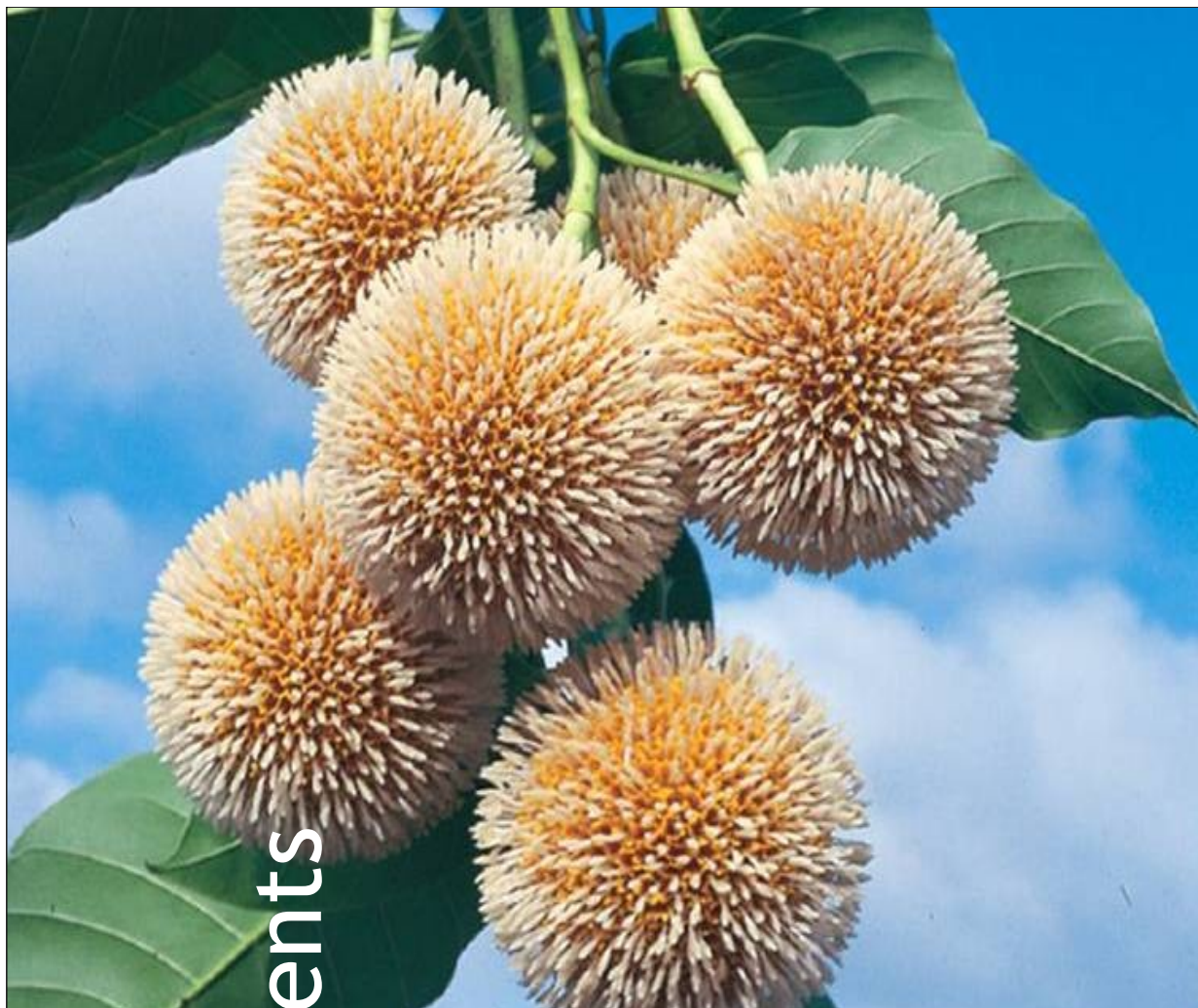
43rd Anniversary

Independence and National Day of

**BANGLADESH**



Embassy of Bangladesh, Riyadh



43rd Anniversary

Independence & National Day of  
B A N G L A D E S H

26 March 2014

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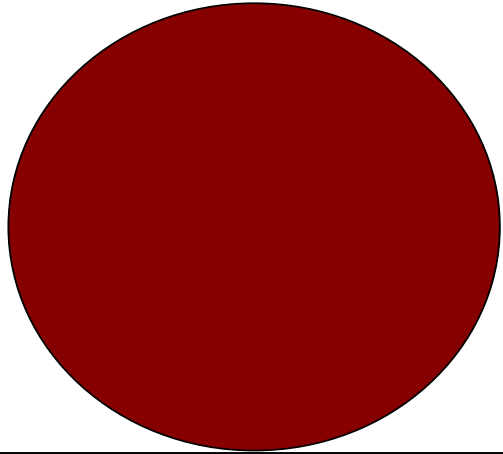
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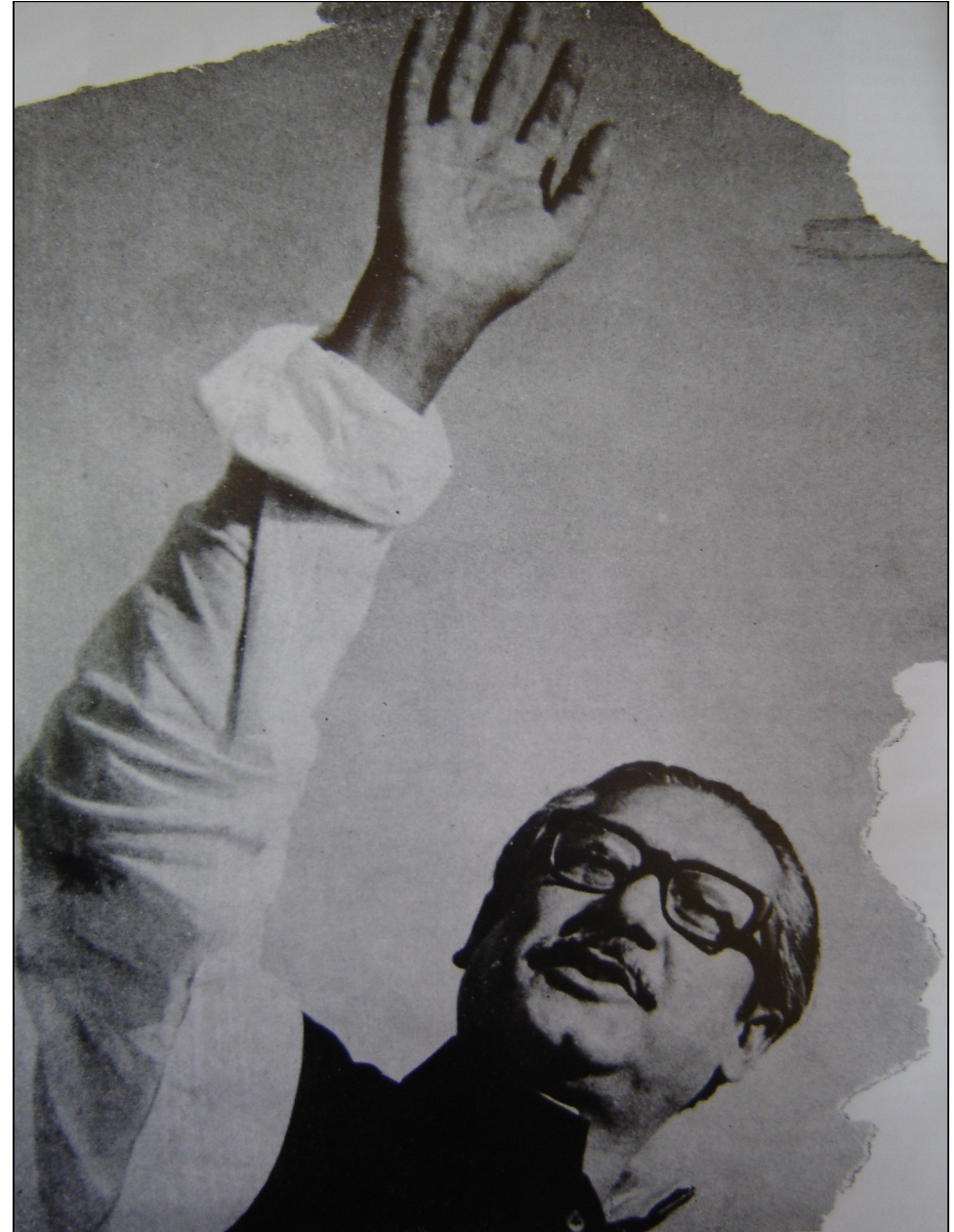
“...the struggle now is the struggle  
for freedom, the struggle now is  
the struggle for independence.”

Clarion call for freedom

on 07 March 1971 at Dhaka's Race Course Ground  
by

**Father of the Nation**

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman





بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



**PRESIDENT**

**PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH**

**DHAKA**

12 Chaitra 1420

26 March 2014

## MESSAGE

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

The great Independence Day is a glorious one in our national life. We achieved our long-cherished independence through a nine-month long armed struggle and manifold forbearance and patience. Today, I recall with deep gratitude the heroic martyrs who made supreme sacrifices in achieving our independence. On this historic day, I recall with profound respect Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who proclaimed country's independence despite myriad challenges and odds. I also recall with deep reverence our four National Leaders; valiant freedom-fighters, organizers, supporters and people from all walks of life for their unmatched contributions and courageous role that accelerated the achievement of our victory. The contributions of those valiant sons would be written in golden letters in the history of our independence forever.

One of the prime objectives of our hard-earned independence was to build a happy and prosperous Bangladesh. Keeping that in mind, the Government has been putting untiring efforts in materializing the objectives of independence. We have been achieved some significant progress in the fields of agriculture, education, health, rural infrastructure, communication, energy and power, trade & commerce, ICT, SME, youth & sports, women and children, women empowerment, etc. in our national life. At the same time we have also attained notable development in private sector including the area of readymade garments, pharmaceuticals, ceramic and ship-building industry. The Government is also very sincere to establish the rule of law, human rights in the country. Our achievement in international arena is also commendable. Bangladeshi Peacekeepers, under the auspices of the United Nations, have brightened the country's image abroad by presenting their professionalism and competence. Our expatriate Bangladeshis have also been making significant contributions to our national economy through sending their hard-earned foreign currencies. Nevertheless, 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 democratic and peace loving. They reject all sorts of violence including militancy and terrorism with abhorrence. It is imperative that the overall development of the country is not possible without the flourish and institutionalization of democracy. Tolerance, fortitude and mutual respect are the preconditions for thriving democracy. Therefore, we have to maintain patience, self-restraint, forbearance along with showing respect to others' opinion in a democratic pluralism. Let us make our Jatiya Sangsad a centre of excellence in resolving our national issues through discussion. I am confident that everyone would play one's responsible role in fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of our people. The present Government has declared 'Vision 2021' for attaining 'Golden Bangla' dreamt by Bangabandhu. It is my conviction that through implementing the 'Vision' people from all strata would contribute to build an IT-based happy and prosperous Bangladesh from their respective position by the golden jubilee celebration of our independence.

On this auspicious day of independence, I urge all living at home and abroad, to work unitedly imbued with the spirit of War of Liberation in order to expedite overall development and democratic advancement of the country.

Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Md. Abdul Hamid



**PRIME MINISTER**  
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH  
DHAKA  
12 CHAITRA 1420  
26 March 2014

## MESSAGE

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 26<sup>th</sup> March is the day of earning self-identity; it's a day of breaking the shackles of subjugation. On this auspicious occasion of the Independence day, I pay my deep homage to the greatest Bangalee of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, under whose dynamic leadership we earned our great independence.

I recall with deep gratitude the 3 million martyrs and 200 thousand women who lost their innocence in the War of Liberation in 1971. We earned our desired victory through their supreme sacrifices.

I also pay my humble tributes to four national leaders who led the liberation war. I pay my respect to the valiant freedom fighters, including the war wounded ones. I extend my sympathies to those who had lost their near and dear ones, and were subjected to brutal torture. I recall with gratitude our foreign friends who had extended their whole-hearted support and cooperation to our liberation war.

The Pakistani occupation forces started massacring innocent and unarmed Bangalees launching sudden attack on the black night of the 25<sup>th</sup> March, 1971. The Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman proclaimed the independence of Bangladesh at the first hour of the 26<sup>th</sup> March. Bangabandhu's proclamation was spread all over the country through telegrams, tele-printers and the wireless of the then EPR. The proclamation was also circulated in international media.

Earlier on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March at Suhrawardy Udyan, Bangabandhu made a fervent call for waging independence struggle. He declared: this time the struggle is for our freedom; this time the struggle is for our independence. He directed the Bangalee nation to resist the enemy. The ultimate victory was earned on the 16<sup>th</sup> December after the 9-month bloody war carried out under the directives of Bangabandhu.

The independence earned through the sacrifice of millions of people is the greatest achievement of Bangalee nation. To make the achievement meaningful, all would have to know the true history of the liberation war, retain the spirit of the independence. It would have to be spread from generation to generations.

We are celebrating this year's Independence and National Day in a new perspective. The countrymen have given opportunity to Awami League again to serve the nation through the January 5 elections. We would definitely protect the dignity of the people's confidence reposed on us.

During the last five years, we accomplished massive developments in every sector of the socio-economic front. Our target is to turn Bangladesh into a middle-income country by the year 2021 and a developed one within the year 2041. We have relentlessly been working to realise the target. Side by side, the execution of the verdicts of the war criminals trials has started. We are committed to reaching the fruits of independence to the doorsteps of the people.

The conspiracy of the anti-liberation communal and anti-democratic forces is continuing to ruin the constitution, democracy and development activities of the government. On this auspicious day, I urge the countrymen to face any ill-attempt against the independence, democracy and anti-country activities.

I hope every Bangalee imbued with the mantra of patriotism would engage themselves from their respective positions and with the highest sincerity, dedication and honesty to turn Bangladesh into a peaceful, non-communal and middle-income country at the Golden Jubilee of Bangladesh. Bangladesh would be established as a dignified nation in the comity of nations.

Let us come and build a Sonar Bangla as dreamt by the Father of the Nation being imbued with ideals of liberation war. This is our fresh vow on this great day.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu  
May Bangladesh Live Forever

Sheikh Hasina





بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



পররাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রী

FOREIGN MINISTER

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

DHAKA

12 Chaitra 1420

26 March 2014

## MESSAGE

On the occasion of the 43<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Independence and National Day, I convey my heartfelt greetings and felicitations to my compatriots living at home and abroad. On this memorable day, I recall with profound respect the greatest Bangalee of all times and Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who proclaimed independence in the early hours of March 26, 1971. Responding to his clarion call, people from all walks of life participated in the War of Liberation and achieved victory on the 16<sup>th</sup> December, 1971. On this day, I pay my deep homage to the three million martyrs who laid down their lives in the War of Liberation in 1971. I pray to the Almighty Allah for the salvation of those departed souls. I also remember the quarter of a million mothers and sisters who sacrificed their honour for the sake of freedom for Bangladesh.

It all began with the assertion of a national identity in the face of systematic denial, discrimination and deprivation of an identity rooted in a millennia-old heritage of language, culture and customs. It evolved through the shaping of political demands for inclusion and equal access to opportunities, against all forms of exploitation of the Bangalee people. It was crystallized into the 6-point programme put forward by Bangabandhu for the emancipation of our people. Then landslide victory of the Awami League in the general elections of December 1970 and the Pakistani military government's refusal to hand over power led to the non-co-operation movement culminating in the declaration of independence by Bangabandhu. After the tragic events of 15 August, 1975, when Bangabandhu was killed along with most members of his family, Bangladesh lapsed into a long period of military dictatorships and the people under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina had to wage another battle for the restoration of democracy.

After restoration of democracy, Sheikh Hasina was elected to office in 1996. She started from where Bangabandhu had left, and once again the country was restored to a place of honour among the comity of nations. During her first term (1996-2001), Bangladesh marched ahead in many fields. The country witnessed remarkable progress at home and earned global recognition as well. Following her landslide victory in the December 2008 elections, Bangladesh made major strides during the second term (2009-2013) specially in the social sector such as reduction of maternity and child mortality rate, revolution in the education sector particularly at the primary level, empowerment of women, development of infrastructure and power generation. The impressive performance of the Government helped earn international recognition and Bangladesh was cited as a role model in many fields. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's tremendous success in the betterment of the lives of the common people led to her re-election in the last elections held on 5 January, 2014.

Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina aims at a middle-income, digital knowledge based Vision of Bangladesh by 2021. On the international front, we have demonstrated our goal and ability to forge partnerships with our neighbours and beyond. We are deeply involved in the process of multilateralism, through global and regional commitments. But the defeated anti-liberation, communal and irredentist forces are trying to destabilize the democratic and development process. We are however determined to end the culture of impunity. The government remains pledge-bound to bring to justice all the crimes committed against humanity during the War of Liberation in 1971. We urge the international community to extend their support and cooperation for this just cause.

On this very day, I take this opportunity to thank all our officers 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 have contributed greatly to the buoyancy of the economy of their country of origin as well as to further development of their host countries.

Today, Bangladesh is marching ahead in all fields under the leadership of our dear leader, Bangabandhu's daughter, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. On this great Day, I urge all to work unitedly imbued with the spirit of War of Liberation to expedite economic self-reliance and democratic advancement of the country for the realisation of Bangabandhu's dream of Sonar Bangla-Golden Bengal.

Joy Bangla,  
Joy Bangabandhu.

Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, MP



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



STATE MINISTER  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH  
DHAKA

12 Chaitra 1420  
26 March 2014

MESSAGE

Today we celebrate the 43<sup>rd</sup> glorious independence of Bangladesh. On this day, Bangladesh woke up to the horrendous genocide unknown to the Bangalees. This darkest episode in our history turned into a full-fledged people's war which helped us become a sovereign country. The heroic struggles of our freedom fighters against the enemy, their sacrifices and their ultimate success in defeating the enemies make us hold our heads high.

On this historic occasion, I express my heartfelt felicitations and greetings to my compatriots living at home and abroad. On this solemn day, I recall with deep respect the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who led the great war of independence in 1971. I pay my deep homage to the martyrs who made supreme sacrifices to liberate the country. I also recall the brave women who sacrificed their honour only to see the country free from subjugation. I also recall with deep respect our four National Leaders who had a great role in our epic struggle. The contributions of those valiant freedom fighters of the soil would be borne in the minds of the people of Bangladesh forever.

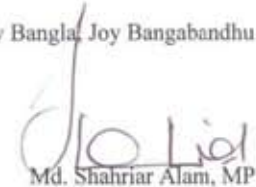
Cherishing the true history of the liberation war, the present government has made giant strides to achieve the objective of a change which will make Bangabandhu's 'Sonar Bangla', the golden Bengal, a reality. Under the dynamic leadership of the Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, we aim at a middle-income, digital, knowledge-based Bangladesh by 2021.

Bangladesh remains committed to bring to end to the culture of impunity and establish the rule of law. The present government will bring all the perpetrators to justice who committed crimes against humanity. No one can deviate us from this onerous task as people have given us the mandate.

At the international front, Bangladesh follows the foreign policy principle "Friendship to all and malice towards none" as outlined by the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. In line with that, Bangladesh has been playing a constructive role in promoting international peace and stability. Ministry remains deeply focused on sub-regional, regional and international issues apart from its bilateral engagements.

I express my appreciation to the expatriate Bangladesh nationals who are continuously contributing to building an economically viable Bangladesh. I also congratulate the officers and officials working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and at Bangladesh Missions abroad for their dedicated services to implement the foreign policy objectives of the government. On this great occasion, I urge all to work unitedly to turn Bangladesh into a 'Sonar Bangla' as envisioned by the Father of the Nation and achieve middle income country status by 2021 as set out by Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Joy Bangla, Joy Bangabandhu

  
Md. Shahriar Alam, MP



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



**AMBASSADOR**  
EMBASSY OF BANGLADESH  
RIYADH  
12 Chaitra 1420  
26 March 2014

### Note from the Ambassador

On the auspicious occasion of the 43<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Independence and National Day of Bangladesh, I extend my heartiest felicitations and sincere greetings to all our friends in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and to all expatriate Bangladesh nationals living in this beautiful country.

This great day as we celebrate, we recall with deep gratitude the greatest Bangalee of all time, the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, under whose dynamic leadership we earned our great independence. On this memorable occasion, we pay deep tribute to the valiant freedom fighters and martyrs of liberation war.

Bangladesh as a country is witnessing rapid transformation. The heroic people of Bangladesh are poised to take off the country to a challenging height. As a result, Bangladesh has made remarkable strides in various sectors. Its achievements in social development and macro-management contribute to elicit unqualified appreciation from the global community. Bangladesh is now one of the 11 promising countries of the 21<sup>st</sup> century who proved its adeptness in facing the recession. Bangladesh has put its efforts to strengthen the process of peace of democracy encouraging dialogue and negotiation and called for reformation to the international order for protection and promotion of the interest of all nations. Our contribution to the UN peace keeping in many troubled spots in the world eloquently speaks of our continuing commitment in this direction. In fact, Bangladesh's enlightened and forward looking foreign policy has made the country an important role player in the UN, NAM, OIC, Commonwealth and other international and regional organizations.

Bangladesh always attaches great importance to its relations with the government and the brotherly people of Saudi Arabia. The existing bonds of friendship between Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia are deep-rooted and are characterized by common priorities, shared perspectives and fraternal relations. The fraternal relations have been further cemented by ever deepening bilateral ties in different areas including cooperation in the field of manpower. Both the countries hold identical positions on most international issues in the international arena, particularly in the issues relating to the causes of Islamic Ummah.

We have made an attempt in this special publication to offer a few aspects on Bangladesh and its socio-economic development. We also take this opportunity to express our gratitude and appreciation to the esteemed contributors, sponsors and well wishers for their cooperation and support to our sincere efforts.

Md. Shahidul Islam





بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



CONSUL GENERAL  
BANGLADESH CONSULATE GENERAL, JEDDAH

12 Chaitra 1420

26 March 2014

## CONSUL GENERAL'S MESSAGE

On the auspicious occasion of the 43<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of our Independence and National Day, I wish to extend my sincere greetings and warm felicitations to the brotherly people and the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to our all friends and well-wishers as well as to my fellow countrymen living in the Kingdom.

On this great day, I recall with profound respect our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who steered us in achieving our long cherished independence. I pay deep tribute to the memories of the martyrs of the War of Liberation as well as to our valiant freedom fighters, whose supreme sacrifices made us free as a nation.

The present Government of Bangladesh, under the dynamic leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has been relentlessly striving towards strengthening democracy, establishing rule of law, ensuring good governance and securing the fundamentals for an unimpeded economic growth. Bangladesh has now become a role model for fighting poverty and extremism, empowering women, disaster management and in coping with challenges posed by global climate change. Over the years, we have strengthened our image as a responsible and contributing member of the committee of nations in various areas of international cooperation including the UN Peacekeeping operations.

As one of the largest Muslim countries Bangladesh enjoys special brotherly relations with Saudi Arabia based on common Islamic values, traditions, faith, culture and mutual respect. We are thankful to the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the generous hosting of a significant number of Bangladeshi expatriates, who have been playing very important and active role to the socio-economic development of the two brotherly countries. I also would like to express my deep appreciation to the government of Saudi Arabia for providing highly commendable support, facilities and services to our Hajj and Umrah pilgrims.

On this memorable day, I also take this opportunity to extend our sincere thanks and gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud for granting General Amnesty to the expatriate Bangladeshi nationals and thereby enabling eight hundred thousand Bangladeshi expatriates to rectify their status. I would also like to express our gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques for his kind and generous directives for allowing Bangladeshi workers transferring their sponsorship and changing their professions effected from 16 February 2014. I urge upon the Bangladeshi expatriates to abide by the rules and regulations of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and to uphold positive image of Bangladesh.

I wish all particularly our expatriates continued peace, prosperity and happiness.

Md. Nazmul Islam

## National Flag of Bangladesh



### National Anthem

My Bengal of gold, I love you  
Forever your skies, your air set my heart in tune as if it  
were a flute,

In Spring, Oh mother mine, the fragrance from your  
mango-groves makes me wild with joy - Ah, what a  
thrill!

In Autumn, Oh mother mine, in the full-blossomes  
paddy fields, I have seen spread all over - sweet  
smiles!

Ah, what a beauty, what shades, what an affection and  
whata tenderness!

What a quilt have you spread at the feet of  
banyan trees and along the banks of rivers!

Oh mother mine, words from your lips are like  
Nectar to my ears!  
Ah, what a thrill!

If sadness, Oh mother mine, casts a gloom on your  
face, my eyes are filled with tears!

### Notation of the National Anthem

The musical notation for the National Anthem of Bangladesh is presented in two staves, treble and bass clef. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the accompaniment is in the bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines, corresponding to the lyrics provided on the left.





Bangladesh National Parliament Building

## BANGLADESH: An Overview

A unitary and sovereign Republic, Bangladesh became an independent nation on 26 March 1971. The nine-month long war of liberation culminated in victory of Bangladesh forces over the Pakistani forces on 16 December 1971, the day celebrated in the country as Victory Day. Since then, the country has been moving forward, both in economic and political fronts. The capital of Bangladesh is Dhaka and the country has a constitutional parliamentary democracy. Bangladesh's enlightened and forward-looking foreign policy has made the country as an important role player in the United Nations, NAM, OIC, Commonwealth and other international organizations. Bangladesh has recently emerged as the first largest contributors to UN peacekeeping operations worldwide. Bangladesh, with a land area of 1,47,570 sq. km and a population of 150 million, is a sub-Himalayan country situated on the north-eastern part of South Asia. Surrounded by India on the east, the west and





Central Shaheed Minar (Language Martyrs' Monument)



the north, and Bay of Bengal on the south, its southeastern fringe touches Myanmar making it a vital link between South and South-East Asia. Bangladesh's northwestern frontiers overlook the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal, which has from time immemorial connected it with Tibet and China. Bangladesh is the largest delta in the world formed by the mighty rivers, such as the Padma, the Jamuna and the Meghna, along with a vast network of smaller rivers. The country is alluvial and marshy along the deltaic region with some idyllic hills providing a pleasing topographical variation on the extreme southeast and northeast.

#### History:

Anthropologist agree that Bangladesh has historically been a land of many races. Long before the arrival of the Aryans, in the 5th and the 6th centuries BC, the Bengalis were already racially mixed and on that count, the Aryans described them as Sankaras or hybrid people. The ancestors of present



Clarion call by the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 7 March 1971



Historic scenes of valiant freedom fighter



day Bangladesh have therefore, emerged from the fusion of such diverse races as the Austric, Dravidian, Tibeto-Burman, Mongoloid, Homo-Alpine, Mediterranean Brown, Caucasians, Aryans and so on.

The earliest historical reference to organized political life in the Bangladesh region is usually traced to the writings on Alexander's invasion of India in 326 BC. The Greek and Latin historians suggested that Alexander the Great withdrew from India anticipating a valiant counter attack from the Gangaridai and Prasioi empires, which were located in the Bengal region. Historians maintain that these empires were succeeded by the Mourya (4th to 2nd

century BC) the Gupta (4th to 6th century AD) empire, the Kingdom of Sasanka (7th century AD), the Buddhist Pala empire (750 -1162 AD) and the Hindu rule of Senas (1162 -1223AD).

From the 13th century AD, the Buddhist and Hindu rulers were swamped



Bangabandhu Memorial Museum



War memorial in Bangladesh



National Martyrs Memorial



Glass Tower at Independent square





Mujibnagar Monument at Meherpur



War Memorial in Bangladesh



Shikha Chiranton, Eternal Flame

by the flood of Muslim conquerors and the tide of Islam continued up to the 18th century. From the 15th century, the Europeans, namely Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British traders exerted an economic influence over the region. British political rule over the region began in 1757 AD, when the last Muslim ruler of Bengal was defeated at Palassey. In 1947, the subcontinent was partitioned into India and Pakistan. Present Bangladesh became the Eastern Wing of the then Pakistan. But the movement for autonomy of East Pakistan started within a

couple of years because language and cultural differences and economic disparity between the two wings.

The language Movement of 1952 to recognize Bangla as a state language may be



Martyred Intellectual Memorial, Rayer Bazar, Dhaka



termed as the first step towards independence. Political and economic

deprivation of the Bengalees prompted Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of the Nation, to put forward in 1966 his historic six points, the “Magna Carta” which in effect structured the foundation for East Pakistan’s future independence. Eventually Bangladesh became an independent country under his great leadership of the Father of the Nation







Shahabuddin | Freedom Fighters | Oil on Canvas : 2009

### Language, Culture and Religion:

Bangladesh is a new state, but has an old culture, which formed an integral part of a civilization, flourishing through the whole eastern part of India. Bangladesh takes pride in her rich cultural heritage. Culture in Bangladesh is a unique blend of traditional values, customs and external influences. Life in Bangladesh bears the hallmark of the country's creative spirit and the pluralist ethos that frames the people's national identity. The time frame from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to the 18<sup>th</sup> century covering three periods—the Buddhist, the Hindu and the Muslim, represent the cultural heritage of Bangladesh at its best.

The country is home to some of the major religions of the world. Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity are all found here.

The Muslims constitute about 88.3% of the population and the Hindus about 10.5%. The rest comprise mainly of Buddhists and Christians. The Constitution guarantees religions and cultural freedom to all citizens of Bangladesh. The country's secular policy is exemplified by the fact that Christmas, Buddha Purnima and Durga Puja are all public



Bangla or Bengali is the official language of Bangladesh. English is widely used in education and business. Bangla is the easternmost of the languages belonging to the Indo-European language family. Bangla is derived from Sanskrit, and is perhaps the only language on the basis of which an independent state (Bangladesh) was created. The earliest available specimen of Bengali literature is about thousand years old. The era of modern Bengali literature began in the late nineteenth century. Bangla is spoken by around 250 million people throughout the world, making it the seventh language after Chinese, English, Hindi-Urdu, Spanish, Arabic and Portuguese.

#### Economic and Social Development:

Bangladesh as a country is witnessing rapid transformation. The enterprising people of Bangladesh are poised to take off the country's economy to a challenging height. It is one of the 18 countries in the world, whose growth over the past two decades exceeded the industrialized countries' long term average growth rate of 2 percent. The favourable investment climate is wooing foreign investors in increasing numbers. The country carried out wide-range of trade and policy reforms during the last two decades. Trade liberalization carried out by Bangladesh has increased its trade.

Bangladesh's achievements in social development and macro-economic management continue to elicit unqualified



Qayyum Choudhury | Liberation | Oil on Canvas : 2001

appreciation from the international community. Bangladesh has emerged as a role model among the developing countries in micro-credit operations, population

growth control, disaster management, non-formal education, women's empowerment and rural development. The country also has made tremendous stride in lowering the overall incidence of poverty, reducing the infant and maternal mortality rate, significant improvement in gender equality in sectors such as, education, health, family welfare, labour and employment,

and democratic participation.

The story of Bangladesh is a success story. Visiting Bangladesh will be an eye opener and a delightful experience even for those who so far exploited the tales of misery and poverty of a land, which has a golden past and a great potential to shape its future.



tolerance and plays a vital role in maintaining peace in the trouble-prone parts of the world being the number one contributor to the United Nations peace-keeping force. A vibrant democracy, Bangladesh is making sustained efforts to spread the message of tolerance, peace and moderation of Islam

and in this regard strengthening cooperation with Saudi Arabia is crucial.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia being the birth place of Islam and home to Islam's two holiest mosques in Makkah and Madina, is the most brotherly and revered country for the 150 million people of Bangladesh, of whom

## BANGLADESH-SAUDI ARABIA BILATERAL RELATIONS

Md. Mosharaf Hossain

Bilateral cooperation between Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia is rooted deep in history, culture and religious bonds. For the past thirty eight years, both Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia have undertaken a journey of shared values that has led us to where we are, a journey of cooperation and mutual trust that has enhanced our bilateral ties, and a journey of friendship that has imprint in our hearts for now and the years to come.

Bangladesh believes in religious harmony and



Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques His Royal Highness King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz discussed on matters of mutual interest



↪  
Saudi Shura Council Speaker  
Dr. Abdullah bin Mohammed  
bin Ibrahim al Sheik calls on  
the Hon'ble President of  
Bangladesh, Jan-2013.



↪  
Saudi Shura Council Speaker  
Meeting with Hon'ble  
Speaker of Bangladesh Parlia-  
ment, Jan-2013.

nearly 90 percent are Muslims. Saudi Arabia has a special place in the hearts of the people of Bangladesh and they always remember the contributions made by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques His Majesty King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz and his government during “our times of need”. Around 1.2 million Bangladeshis working here felt proud to be a part of the development activities of the great country. The extents of bilateral relations that so happily exist between the two friendly countries have endured the test of time.

Bangladesh’s relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are multifaceted. Interactions between the peoples of the two countries date back to more than thousand years. Arab traders used to visit Chittagong port since the early days of Islam. Now is the time not only to reinvigorate these ties but also to explore possibilities of further expanding them to



Saudi Shura Council Speaker Dr. Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Ibrahim al Sheik calls on the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh on 7 January 2013.





Foreign Minister calls on the Crown Prince HRH Prince Salman bin Abdul Aziz Jeddah, 05 May 2013



Foreign Minister calls on the Second Deputy Premier HRH Prince Miqrin bin Abdul Aziz, Riyadh, 22 June 2013

newer areas like investment, tourism, and cultural exchanges.

Over the last 38 years, Bangladesh-Saudi friendship has not only endured the vicissitude of time, but also been consolidated and prospered. We have been maintaining good momentum of high-level exchanges and contacts, deepening our mutual trust. Especially during the last three years the high level visits by Ministers, Parliamentarians, and senior officials from Bangladesh has increased significantly.



Dr. Dipu Moni MP, handed over the letters of the hon'ble President Md Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to Dr. Nizar Obaid Madani, Vice Foreign Minister, June 2013

The end of the year 2013 witnessed a visit of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 21-24 November 2013 as the Royal Guest of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud to perform Umrah and Jiarrah. She led a 60-member delegation, which included the sister of the Hon'ble Prime Minister Mrs. Rehana Siddique and former Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni, MP and high officials from different Ministries.

Moreover, in 2013 only, there were as many as



Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni MP meets Saudi Foreign Minister HRH Prince Saud Al Faisal, Jeddah, 04 May 2013

seven Ministerial visits from Bangladesh to Saudi Arabia. Ministerial level visits in 2013 only include the Bangladesh Foreign Minister's visits to Saudi Arabia in April, May, June and August, Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister's visits to Saudi Arabia in July, and Cultural Affairs Minister's visit in March. During the visit of the Hon'ble Foreign Minister to the Kingdom on 04-05 May 2013, she had a fruitful and effective bilateral meeting with her counterpart His Royal Highness Prince Saud Al Faisal. In addition to bilateral meetings with her Saudi counterpart, she called on the Deputy Prime Minister and Crown Prince HRH Prince Salman Bin Abdul Aziz, Saudi Minister of Labour Engineer Adel bin Muhammad Fakeih during the visit. The Hon'ble Foreign Minister also handed over a letter from the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh addressed to His Majesty King of Saudi Arabia during the visit.



Meeting of Bangladesh Minister for Expatriates' Welfare & Overseas Employment Eng. Khandker Mosharraf Hossain, MP with the HRH Prince Saud bin Nalif bin Abdul Aziz, Governor of Eastern Province, 11 July 2013



Meeting of Eng. Khandker Mosharraf Hossain, MP with the HRH Prince Khalid bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz, Governor of Riyadh, 09 July 2013





Bilateral meeting between Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Eng. Khandker Mosharraf Hossain, MP and his counter part Eng. Adel Fakeih, 7 July 2013

The visit of the Hon'ble Foreign Minister was the most significant and successful in enhancing our existing bilateral relations. Immediately after her visit, the Saudi Government declared general amnesty to the expatriate Bangladesh nationals on 10 May 2013 and Bangladesh nationals were allowed to transfer iqamas and change profession. Dr. Dipu Moni, M.P. also paid another official visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 18-22 June 2013. During her visit she had a meeting with the Saudi Foreign Minister in charge HE Dr. Nizar Obaid Madani and handed over two letters of thanks addressed to the His Majesty King by the Hon'ble President and the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh for allowing Bangladeshi workers to correct their employment status and change their Iqama.

In the meeting, matters relating to mutual interests to both the countries were discussed and the Hon'ble Foreign Minister also requested him to extend the amnesty period to the expatriate Bangladesh nationals.

The Hon'ble Foreign Minister also met the Second Deputy Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia His Royal Highness Prince Muqrin bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and requested to extend the amnesty period.

Moreover, the visit of the Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister H E Engineer Khandker Mosharraf Hossain, MP to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 06-12 July 2013 added impetus in our bilateral relations in the field of manpower export from

Bangladesh. The two sides reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations with special focus on cooperation in the field of human resources. The issue of iqama transfer for all Bangladesh workers in the Kingdom figured prominently in the discussions. Both the sides identified and acknowledged areas of mutual concern and were convinced that joint efforts would help overcome the existing challenges and broaden the horizon of cooperation.

The visits of the Hon'ble Foreign Minister and Hon'ble Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas



Bilateral meeting between Bangladesh Minister for Health and family welfare Mr. Mohammad Nasim, MP and his Saudi counterpart Dr. Abdullah Al Rabeeah, Riyadh, 09 February 2014



Employment Minister were also very significant and successful in enhancing our existing bilateral relations. In response to their requests, the Saudi Government extended the general amnesty for another four months (up to 03 November 2013) to the expatriate Bangladesh nationals.

Under the provision of the General Amnesty in Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh nationals were given opportunity to legalize their status by transferring their iqamas and changing profession during the period from 11 May to 03 November 2013. As a result, 7,99,186 Bangladesh nationals have been benefitted out of which, 4,36,473 changed their sponsors, 3,30,975 changed their professions and 31,738 returned to Bangladesh on final exit during General Amnesty.



Health Minister Mr. Mohammad Nasim led Bangladeshi delegation with Saudi Commission of Health Specialties, Riyadh 09 February 2014





Bilateral meeting between Bangladesh Minister for Religious Affairs, Principal Motiar Rahman MP & Saudi Minister for Hajj Dr. Bandar bin Hajjar, Makkah, 16 February 2014



Hon'ble Minister for Cultural Affairs of the Government of Bangladesh, Mr. Abul Kalam Azad had an official visit to the Kingdom on 11-14 March 2013 to attend the opening ceremony of the yearlong celebrations to mark Madinah as the capital of Islamic culture.

The high level visit from the Saudi side in 2013 started with the visit of the Hon'ble Speaker of the Majlis Ash Shura (Shura Council) of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia H. E. Dr. Abdullah Bin Mohammed Bin Ibrahim Al-Sheik, who led a 13-member delegation to visit Bangladesh on 06-09 January 2013.

A high level Saudi delegation comprising representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Labour of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia visited Bangladesh from 30 March to 04 April 2013 in connection with the status of human resources of Bangladesh to be exported to the kingdom.



Bangladesh Cultural Affairs Minister Abul Kalam Azad attended the opening ceremony of events Madinah: The Capital of Islamic Culture, Madinah, 11-14 March 2013



State Minister for Youth and Sports Shri Biren Skhikder led a Three member delegation to the 2nd Islamic Conference of Minister of Youth and Sports, Jeddah, 17-18 March 2014



The high level visit between the two countries in 2014 started with the visit of the Hon'ble Minister for Health and Family Welfare of the Government of Bangladesh H. E. Mr. Mohammed Nasim, MP, who led a 6-member delegation for his official visit to Saudi Arabia on 07-09 February 2014. During the visit, Hon'ble Health and Family Welfare Minister had a bilateral meeting with Saudi counterpart, H E Dr Abdullah Al Rabeeah, MD, FRCS (C). The visit of the Hon'ble Health Minister to the Kingdom was very significant and provided opportunity to exchange views with his Saudi counterpart. The visit of the Hon'ble health Minister set a stage for fresh thrust in our existing bilateral relations, particularly in the field of health sector

cooperation.

On 16 February 2014, a bilateral meeting at the level of Ministers between the two countries was held to sign the Hajj management agreement. After the meeting, Bangladesh Minister for Religious Affairs, Principal Motiar Rahman, MP and Saudi Hajj Minister Dr. Bandar bin Hajjar signed the Hajj agreement with the provision of 1,01,758 pilgrims to perform Hajj from Bangladesh in the year 2014.

Hon'ble State Minister for Youth and Sports of the Government of Bangladesh, Shri Biren Sikder, MP led a 3-member delegation to attend the 2<sup>nd</sup> Islamic Conference of Youth and Sports Ministers held in Jeddah on 17-18

March 2014.

All these visits have added new momentum and generated greater enthusiasm to the existing close relations between the two countries. These exchanges of high-level visits also signify the intention of both the governments to encourage and maintain cooperation across all sectors between Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia.

The 10<sup>th</sup> session of Saudi-Bangladesh Joint Commission (JC) meeting, which was the first JC meeting in almost five years, has provided further impetus in our bilateral relations.





Advocate Shahjahan Miah MP, State Minister for Religious Affairs led a Bangladesh delegation for his bilateral meeting with Saudi Minister for Hajj Dr. Bandar bin Hajjar, Makkah 27 Feb. 13

The 10<sup>th</sup> session of the Joint Commission (JC) meeting, which was held on 25-26 February 2013 in Riyadh, provided a platform for multifarious engagement with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in securing tangible benefits in terms of economy, trade, investment, education, culture, human resource development, manpower cooperation and other development cooperation.

Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia have signed several Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs)/Agreements to facilitate collaboration in diverse fields over the years. Bilateral relations particularly in the field of trade and commerce have received a new -

thrust after the recent signing of the Avoidance of Double Taxation Agreement.

Another epoch-making agreement on Reciprocal Promotion and Protection of Investments has been finalized and is expected to be inked shortly and this treaty would herald a new era in facilitating investments in both the countries.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is one of Bangladesh's longstanding development partners. Since formal recognition of Bangladesh by Saudi Arabia in 1975, bilateral relations between the two countries have grown steadily in depth and dimension. Beyond the ambit of political relations,

cooperation between the two countries in economic fields has developed substantially. Saudi Arabia has been consistently extending financial and technical assistance to Bangladesh in various fields. Bangladesh has received economic assistance in various sectors including Rural Infrastructure Development, Health, Rural Electrification, Communication, Irrigation, Disaster/Post Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation in the form of grants and loans.

Bilateral trade between the two countries increased steadily over the last couple of years and there is a potential for further improvement in bilateral trade as two countries have much to offer to each other.



10th Session of Bangladesh -Saudi Arabia Joint Commission (JC) meeting, 25-26 February 2013

According to latest statistics, the annual two-way trade rose to US\$ 961.34 million in FY 2012-13 as against US\$ 922.33 million in the FY 2011-12. The Kingdom mainly imports ready-made garments (knits and woven), frozen food, dry food, fresh vegetables, various spices and curry powder, melamine items while it exports oil, petro-chemicals and fertilizers in large quantities.

Saudi large scale investments in Bangladesh basically started with the establishment of Saudi Bangladesh Industrial and Agricultural Investment Company (SABINCO) in 1984 with its headquarters in Dhaka. The company was set up with a view to promoting Saudi investments in Bangladesh. It has so far financed 50 projects in 11 sub sectors including textile, cement, fisheries and

chemicals.

A number of Saudi entrepreneurs have already shown keen interest to invest in power generation plant in Bangladesh. There is also scope for Saudi investments in information technology, manufacturer of ceramic products, pharmaceuticals, and the development of tourism projects in Bangladesh.

Saudi Arabia has also been providing invaluable assistance over the years towards our country's socio-economic development. Bangladesh has been benefited from the close and productive cooperation with the kingdom in diverse fields. Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) has been providing economic assistance to Bangladesh since 1975. Bangladesh has so far received a total



Signing of agreed minutes of the 10th JC meeting, Riyadh 26 February 2013

of SR 1,566.31 million as economic assistance from Saudi Arabia. The priority sectors of the SFD assisted projects are Infrastructure Development, Roads & Railways, Irrigation, Rural electrification, Fertilizer, Health, etc. The Construction of Shitalakha Bridge project worth SR 168.75 million, Construction of Maghbazar-Mouchak flyover project worth SR 200.00 million and Construction of Shikalbaha 225 MW Dual Fuel Project worth SR 200.00 million are SFD assisted on-going projects in Bangladesh. These projects have been seen as a sign of renewed attention of the Kingdom to the socio-economic development of Bangladesh.



Bangladesh always attaches great importance on its ties with the government and the people of Saudi Arabia. The existing brotherly relations between Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia, which is based on common Islamic values and mutual respect, have been further cemented by the valuable contributions of our expatriates, who have been playing very important and significant role to the economic development of the two brotherly countries.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is still the most valued destination for the Bangladesh workforce despite all odds and obstacles in the field of manpower cooperation. Around 1.2 million Bangladesh nationals are now employed in the Kingdom which positively contributes to enhanced people to people contacts. They develop an understanding and appreciation of Saudi values, traditions and customs.

The Government of Bangladesh has adopted a proactive, concerted and action oriented comprehensive policy guide line considering the importance of the export of human resources to the national development of Bangladesh. Taking this into consideration, the Bangladesh Government has undertaken multifaceted steps and programs to expand the scope for overseas employment opportunities and to promote transparency and ensure qualitative changes to the recruitment process. The aims of this policy are also to minimize migration costs of sending Bangladesh workforce to world labor market and create an environment for accessibility of aspirant workers to migration process from all areas of the country.

As a result of the timely and target oriented



Members of Bangladesh-Saudi Arabia 10th JC meeting, Riyadh , 26 February 2013

policy of the Government, Bangladesh workforce in the world labor market has now not only earned admiration for the country but contributed significantly to the national development of the country. More than 8.9 million Bangladesh workforce including skilled and semi-skilled, professionals like doctors, engineers, paramedics, nurses, teachers, bankers, IT workers spread worldwide including Saudi Arabia with their competence.

These excellent relations between Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia may be attributed to the fact that both countries share many common perspectives, values and commitments. Today there is contact between an impressive range of individuals and institutions in almost every sector of our

two societies. Bangladesh hopes to build on the achievements of the past to set up a future of even closer co-operation and understanding both at the bilateral and multilateral levels between Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia and their peoples to herald a defining moment of raising our relationship to a new pedestal in the coming years.

The writer is the Counsellor at the Bangladesh Embassy, Riyadh.

## Bangladesh in OIC

Bangladesh, as the third largest Muslim-majority country in the world, has Islamic ethos and values as natural focus in its foreign relations. The traditional social and religious bonds that tie the people of Bangladesh with the Islamic Ummah were further institutionalized through Bangladesh's joining the OIC in February 1974 at the 2nd Islamic Summit Conference held in Lahore. Bangladesh takes pride in belonging to Muslim community of the world while retaining the national identities for promoting brotherly relationships among Muslim countries under the aegis of OIC and harmonious relationship with other countries.

Over the span of 40 years,



OIC Secretary General Mr. Iyad Ameen Madani calls on the Prime Minister of Bangladesh HE Sheikh Hasina, Dhaka 09 March 2014

Bangladesh also remained actively involved in all important issues confronting the Islamic Ummah, including the Palestine and Middle East issue, Iran-Iraq War, Gulf-War, Bosnia-Herzegovina crisis, Afghan problem, Muslim minority dispute in Southern Philippines, etc. In recognition of its pragmatic role and earnest endeavor for peace and solidarity, Bangladesh was elected member in many OIC Committees. Bangladesh's current

membership includes the OIC Committee of Al-Quds, the OIC Peace Committee on Southern Philippines and OIC Contact Group on Rohingya Minority Muslims.

Bangladesh is proud to host the Islamic University of Technology (IUT) in Dhaka. It is a premier institute in the field of applied science and engineering that has been extending valuable services to the





OIC Secretary General Mr. Iyad Ameen Madani calls on the President of Bangladesh HE Md. Abdul Hamid, Dhaka, 10 March 2014

human resources development of the Islamic Ummah. Since joining the OIC, Bangladesh has actively participated in all the OIC Summits and CFMs as well as in other important meetings and has consistently endeavored to promote the immutable objectives of the OIC Charter and the causes of the Islamic Ummah.

Her Excellency Dr. Dipu Moni, MP, Hon'ble Foreign Minister of Bangladesh led the Bangladesh delegation for the 12<sup>th</sup> Session of the Islamic Summit Conference, which was held in Cairo on 2-7 February 2013. Moreover, Mr Md Shahidul Haque, Foreign Secretary led the Bangladesh delegation to the 40<sup>th</sup> Session of Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) held in Conakry, Guinea on 9-11 December 2013.

In the context of renewed spate of violence between Muslims and Buddhists in Rakhine State of Myanmar, Bangladesh became a member of the OIC Contact Group on Rohingya Muslims that had been established by the 4<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Summit of OIC held in Makkah on 14-15 August 2012. This has allowed Bangladesh to play a constructive



OIC Secretary General Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu calls on the Prime Minister of Bangladesh HE Sheikh Hasina, Dhaka, 06 May 2013



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina awards 'Bangladesh Friendship Medal' to OIC Secretary General Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Dhaka, 06 May 2013



OIC Secretary General Mr. Iyad Ameen Madani meets the Hon'ble Finance Minister of Bangladesh Mr. Abul Maal Abdul Muhith, Dhaka 09 March 2014



Bangladesh Foreign Minister Mr. Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, MP with OIC Secretary General Dhaka, 09 March 2014



Meeting between Education Minister Mr. Nurul Islam Nahid, MP and OIC Secretary General Dhaka, 09 March 2014

role in formulation of an appropriate OIC approach on the situation concerning Muslim minority in Myanmar that often has cross-border implications for Bangladesh. Very recently, Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh Mr Md. Shahidul Haque participated in a seven-member Ministerial Delegation of the Contact Group to Myanmar on 14-17 November 2013.

Bangladesh hosted the 19<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Islamic World Academy of Sciences in Dhaka on 06-09 May 2013. The Honourable Prime Minister was the Chief Patron of this Conference. The Conference brought together many renowned scientists of the Muslim world. Bangladesh government decorated the former OIC Secretary General, Prof. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu with "Bangladesh Friendship Medal" during his visit to Bangladesh in this connection.





Dr. Dipu Moni, Mp deliver speech during 12th OIC Summit in Cairo , 6-7 February 2013.



Foreign secretary Md. Shahidul Haque Chairing one of the Plenary Sessions of 40th CFM of OIC held in Conakry, 09-11 December 2013.



Ambassador Md. Shahidul Islam with Lyad Ameen Madani, Bangladesh House , Riyadh

Upon an official invitation from the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Mr. Lyad Ameen Madani, paid an official visit to Dhaka from 9 -11 March 2014. During the visit, the Secretary General met with the Hon'ble President of Bangladesh H. E. Mr. Md. Abdul Hamid, Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh H. E. Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister, Finance Minister and Minister of Education. Mr. Madani visited the IUT Campus at Gazipur near Dhaka and shared his views with the faculty and the students on how to turn the University as a centre of excellence in the field of science and technology. He also visited the University of

Dhaka and Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), a 'not-for-profit' company established in 1990 by the Government of Bangladesh to provide funds to various organizations for their microcredit programme with a view to help the poor. During his visit, the Secretary General witnessed the proceedings of the Parliament where he was formally introduced to the house by the Speaker. The members of the Parliament warmly welcomed his presence.

Bangladesh is firmly determined to invigorate the OIC and to consolidate its role as a means of promoting cooperation among the member states in order to meet the aspirations of our peoples and prepare the Islamic Ummah to face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.





## Activities on General Amnesty

Mohammed Ayub

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud manifested his unique humanitarian gesture by declaring general amnesty to millions of expatriate workers living in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The general amnesty, which started on 10 May 2013, provided the golden opportunity for expatriate Bangladesh nationals to regularize their employment status.

Immediately after the declaration of general amnesty, the expatriate Bangladesh nationals took the benefit of it and started transferring their sponsorship in addition to changing profession. Initially, the Government of Saudi Arabia declared the amnesty for three months ending on 03 July 2013.









Expatriates in a hurry to avail the opportunities of General Amnesty





Bangladesh nationals are eager to get new passports and legalize their status

Meanwhile, Hon'ble Foreign Minister of Bangladesh Dr. Dipu Moni, MP visited Saudi Arabia on 18-22 June 2013 to request the Saudi Government to extend the general amnesty period. During her visit she had a meeting with the Saudi Foreign Minister in charge, HE Dr. Nizar Obaid Madani and handed over two letters of thanks addressed to the His Majesty King by the Hon'ble President and the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh for allowing Bangladeshi workers to correct their employment status and change their Iqama.

The Hon'ble Foreign Minister also requested him to extend the amnesty period to the expatriate Bangladesh nationals so that they could take the benefit of the general amnesty declared by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques.

Finally, on 02 July 2013, His Majesty the King extended the amnesty period by four months until 03 November 2013 so that illegal workers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia might get the opportunity to correct their status.

Moreover, the visit of the Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister H E Engineer Khandker Mosharraf Hossain, MP to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 06-12 July 2013 added impetus in our bilateral relations in the field of manpower export from Bangladesh. The issue of iqama transfer for all Bangladesh workers in the Kingdom figured prominently in the discussions. Both the sides identified and acknowledged areas of mutual concern and were convinced that joint efforts would help overcome the existing challenges and broaden the horizon of cooperation.





Immediately after the declaration of general amnesty, Bangladesh Embassy in Riyadh and Bangladesh Consulate General in Jeddah started providing consular services under the amnesty to Bangladeshi nationals with the support of Bangladesh community in the Kingdom. To ensure highest benefit of Amnesty, the Bangladesh Embassy in Riyadh and the Consulate General of Bangladesh, Jeddah rendered required services 24 hours during the whole amnesty period including weekly holidays to Bangladeshi nationals. In addition to the Chancery premises, because of huge inflow of service seekers, two more venues were hired at the periphery of Riyadh city. Other than Riyadh and Jeddah number of mobile consular camps were operated from major cities of Saudi Arabia such as Dammam, Buraidah, Jubail and Al-Hasa, Arar, Guraiyath, Hafar Al Baten, Sakaka, Madinah, Khamis, Tabuk, Jijan, Albaha and Nazran. Around 305 officers and officials were sent from various Ministries and Departments to Saudi Arabia- Riyadh and Jeddah- to assist the Missions in rendering services to the expatriates.

In addition to various other services, the following consular services rendered during General Amnesty (11 May to 03 November 2013) by Bangladesh Embassy in Riyadh and Bangladesh Consulate General in Jeddah to the expatriate Bangladesh nationals:

| Description         | RIYADH      | JEDDAH      | TOTAL       |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| New Passport        | 86,050      | 72,884      | 1,58,934    |
| Renewal of Passport | 41,865      | 53,401      | 95,266      |
| Out pass            | 40,958      | 52,139      | 93,097      |
| Others              | 3,924       | 9,030       | 12,954      |
| Total Service       | 1,72,797    | 1,87,454    | 3,60,251    |
| Earnings in SR      | 2,77,06,615 | 2,90,97,600 | 5,68,04,215 |

Under the provision of the General Amnesty in Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh nationals were given opportunity to legalize their status by transferring their iqamas and profession change during the period from 11 May to 03 November 2013. As a result, 7,99,186 Bangladesh nationals have been benefitted out of which, 4,36,473 changed their sponsors, 3,30,975 changed their professions and 31,738 returned to Bangladesh on final exit during General Amnesty.

The writer is the Counsellor at the Bangladesh Embassy, Riyadh



Old passports helped many workers legalize their status





Baitul Mukarram Mosque, the national mosque in the centre of Dhaka city .

## Bangladesh: A Model of Communal Harmony

Bangladesh is a land of religious freedom, harmony and tolerance. There are a range of religious communities and various groups constituting the population of Bangladesh. Such communities and groups live in peace, putting aside all the differences and learning to accept and appreciate the diverse and heterogeneous culture, which has made Bangladesh a land of equality. Bangladesh is a glaring example of a nation, which has unflinching social and religious harmony. A rich culture of tolerance and respect amongst individuals regardless of each others' beliefs and viewpoints makes this country a model of communal harmony. Their liberal dispositions have added to the synchronization of the nation.





Hazrat Shah Jalal Mosque, Sylhet





The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees full and equal religious freedom for all communities. It states that “It provides for the right to profess, practice or propagate any religion,” and “Every religious community or denomination has the right to establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions

“I always say that, religion is personal but Festivals are for all. Peace friendship and harmony are our pride,” the Hon’ble Prime Minister of the Government of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina made this remark adding that the communal harmony being nurtured here for thousand of years should be protected at any cost.

The four significant religions in the country are Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity. The Muslims make up about



Kuptan Bazar Zama Mosque, Comilla

Lalbag Fort Mosque, Dhaka

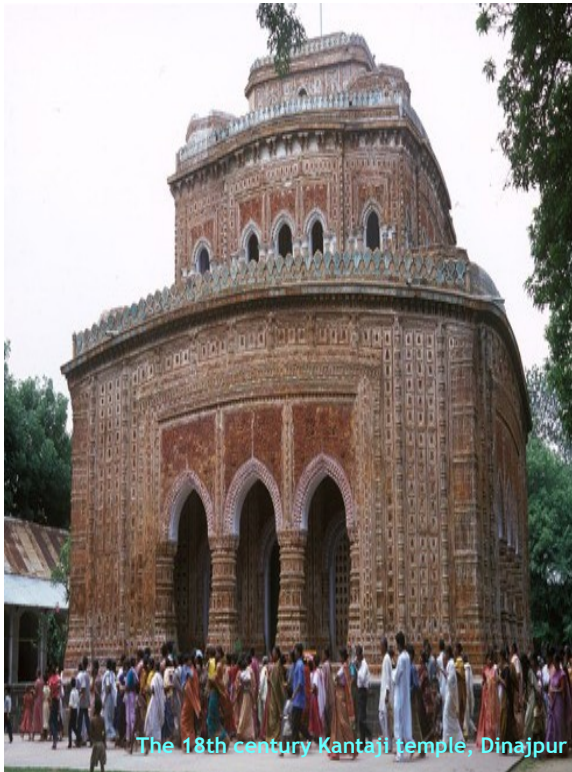
Khan Mohammad Mridha’s Mosque, Dhaka

Shah Shuja Mosque, Bangladesh



88.3% of the population. The majority of the Muslims in Bangladesh are Sunnis, but about 3% of the Muslim population consists of Shi’a





The 18th century Kantaji temple, Dinajpur

Muslims. The Hindu population is about 10.5%. The rest comprise mostly of Buddhists and Christians.

Bangladesh is a country where colourful festivals are held throughout the year in a befitting manner and with great zeal and zest. Certain festivals are deeply rooted in the social organism, and they continue to entertain people from generation to generation.

The biggest religious festival is Eid-ul-Fitr. Other Muslim festivals include Eid-ul-



Azha, Eid-e-Milanunnabi, Muharram and Shab-e-Barat.

Various other occasions that are celebrated by other communities include Durga Puja of the Hindus, Christmas on December 25 celebrated by the Christians and Buddha Purnima of the Buddhists. These festivals do not only have the stamp of religion, but they bear the mark of the community and the nation.



Dhakeshary Mandir, Dhaka



Devotees at a Buddhist Pagoda in Bangladesh



Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam

## The Musical Tradition of Bangladesh

Shamika Shabnam

The kinship between musicality and Bangladesh is deeply embedded within the very hub of the Bengali language. The elements of *Bangla* speech carry an intonation of vocal melody and harmony which embraces the multiple dialects and idiolects that prevail throughout the sub-linguistic nation of Bangladesh. However Bangladeshi musicality goes beyond the paradigms of a melodious lingo into one which can be broadly categorised among the following genres:

### Classical:

Bangladeshi classical music is based on modes known as *ragas* (one of the melodic modes prevalent within *Bangla* classical tunes). The *ragas*' origin dates back to the thirteenth century where numerous modes were inscribed in the *Sangita-ratnajara* (The



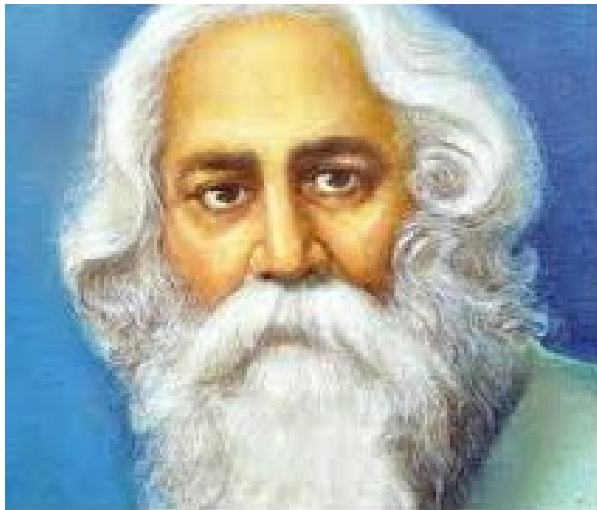


Tabla



Dhol

Music Mine of Jewels) treatise. The treatise was developed by the then Indian classical

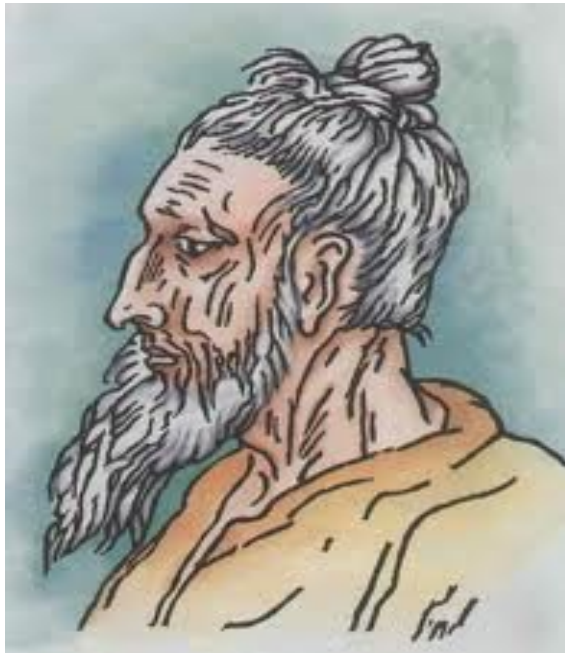


Rabindranath Tagore: Nobel laureate and Bengali literary and musical polymath

musicologist Sarangdeva. The classical *raga* coordination has been prevalent since the Mughal era until present day Bangladesh. Classical music is primarily a solo improvisation based on a specific *raga* selected from the numerous ones passed down from musicians to their disciples. The soloist generally begins with a musical/melodic improvisation in free rhythm called an *alap* (conversation). This is followed by an improvisation that corresponds to the *taal* (rhythmic pattern). Reiteration of the beat, rhythmic emotiveness and concomitance to the *sargam* (singing notes) are characteristics of the classical tune. The *harmonium* (pump organ), *tabla* (membranophone percussion instrument), violin and *sitar* (plucked, stringed instrument) are a handful of the many instruments that are implemented in order to produce a classical melody. *Ranbindra Sangeet* is one of the most



Kazi Nazrul Islam: National poet of Bangladesh



Lalon Shah: Bengali Baul saint and mystic songwriter

prominent sub-genres of classical music in the nation. With a blend of innovative influence of modernism, *Rabindra Sangeet*'s ontology spans from the Nobel laureate and Bengali literary and musical polymath Rabindranath Tagore. *Rabindra Sangeet*, complete with expressions of patriotism, rebel-resistance and romanticism, has engraved an archetypal epiphany within the hearts of the Bangladeshi individuals.

Another popular sub-genre within the classical front is *Nazrul Geeti* which translates as 'the music of Nazrul', based on the works of Kazi Nazrul Islam, the national poet of Bangladesh and an active revolutionary during the nation's independence movement. He is best known as *Bidrohi Kobi* (Rebel Poet) whose poetry and music espoused spiritual rebellion against oppression. Out of his compositions, *The Song of Youth: Chol Chol Chol* hitherto

lingers within the Bangladeshi lilt. It was adopted as a *National Marching Song* by the Government of Bangladesh in 1972 on their post-independence meeting.

#### Folk:

*Bangla* Folk is a lyric-oriented musical tradition, with minimal instrumental accompaniment. It derives from the Bengali folk culture wherein oral, folkloric narratives were exchanged among the rural, agrarian community. Unlike classical, folk music bears a simple musical structure. It also comprises a reiterative melody, particularly used for gathering the attention of the rural audience. The *ektara* (one-stringed instrument) and *dotara* (two-stringed instrument) are the primal instruments used to create the simplistic yet subtle, communal melody. At times folk music would consist of the *dhol* (a barrel-shaped, cylindrical, wooden drum) to add spontaneity to the



Ektara: One-stringed musical instrument

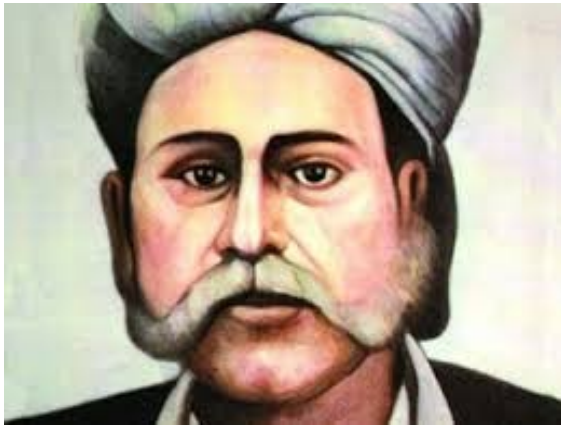


Dotara: Two-stringed musical instrument



Flute





Hason Raja: A mystic philosopher and folk-song writer and composer

already vibrant tunes of *Bangla* folk.

Present day Bangladeshi folk songs have been incorporated into *Adhunik Sangeet* (Modern



Abbas Uddin: Bengali Folk Song composer and singer

Songs) which have been substantially rampant throughout various locations within an urban milieu. The New wave of Bangladeshi folk music of Momtaz, Kangalini Sufiya and Kuddus Boyati set notions of revitalising Bangladeshi folk music. Besides the entrenchment of modernity, the folk could be divided into many different sub-genres. Some of which are: *Baul* and *Lalon* which were both composed by a spiritual Bangladeshi composer known as Lalon Shah (Lalon Fokir). Among the proponents of *Lalon*

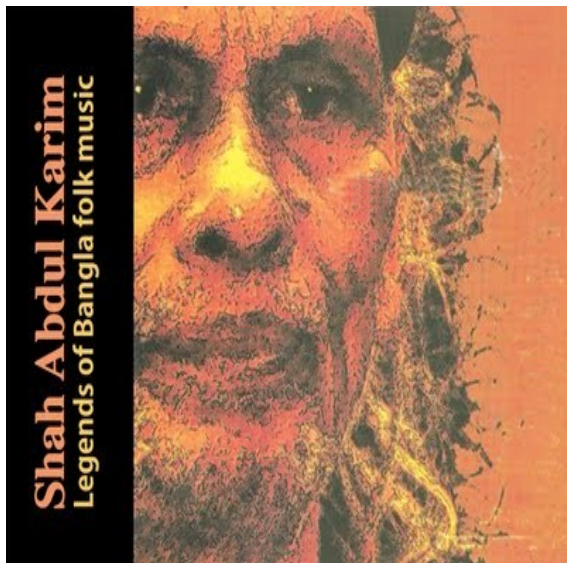
*geeti* (Lalon Song), Farida Parveen is particularly worth mentioning for her extensive work in modernising tunes.

### ***Bangla* Band:**

With the influx of digital media, the generation of Bangladeshi youth and modernity has fabricated the synthesis of traditional *Baul* and contemporary, Western rock. In 'Search For an Idiom', Ananya Kabir points towards her encounter with a '*Bangla* band somewhat different from the dime-a-



Shop selling traditional musical instruments



dozen ones that have sprung up lately airwaves. Our *bangla* bands [she says] celebrate a decidedly middle-class urban Bengali experience through an idiom of music that remains a derivative of easy-to-listen rock'. With the constant mushrooming of regional bands in the urban capital of Dhaka, Kabir notes the name of a particular band known as Bangla and emphasises upon their first album *Kingkartabbabimurho* ('Nonplussed') which 'interprets the music of *bauls* through a wide range of Western sounds but without sacrificing the simplicity of folk instruments and of regional Bangla accents'.

The amalgamation of globalization is reflected through the fusionist musicality of the *dotaara* (double-stringed instrument) and



Performance of Baul song



Performance by a modern Bangla band

electric guitar that has been implemented within the *Bangla* bands. With the concomitance of the evergreen Tagore classics, along with the roots of folk and emergence of band, the musical tradition of Bangladesh is indeed a diverse institution of polarised genres captured by the harmony of a communal existence.

Shamika Shabnam is currently doing her Masters in Postcolonial Literary and Cultural Studies at the University of Leeds, United Kingdom





## SHIPBUILDING :

### A Potential Sector for Investment in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has recently joined the international shipbuilding industry though it has long history of shipbuilding as regards to riverine coastal ocean-faring vessels. The large international market for small ocean-faring vessels, rising labor cost and availability of skilled labor at low price have created huge opportunity for Bangladesh to build and export ocean going vessels at a competitive price.



Building of ocean going Ships in Chittagong, Bangladesh

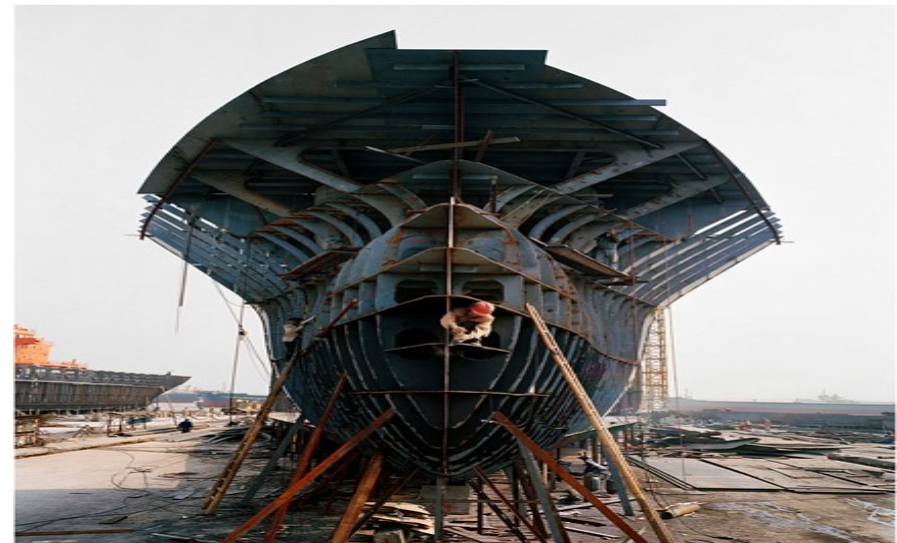


### **Market share of world shipbuilding industry in 21<sup>st</sup> century:**

The global shipbuilding is currently dominated by South Korea , which is by far the world's largest shipbuilding nation. Its pre-eminence in the industry is largely due to South Korea's highly advanced shipbuilding technology, the strong work ethic of the labor force and the high productivity and efficiency of South Korean shipbuilders. China is a fast emerging shipbuilder that is poised to overtake South Korea in the future, although its current production is limited mainly to low-cost basic vessels.

### **Present position of shipbuilding industry in Bangladesh:**

Major shipbuilding countries such as Korea, China, Japan and Vietnam have all moved their focus towards building large ocean-faring vessels, for which less intensive labor is required. This, however, has left an opportunity for developing countries like Bangladesh to produce small sized ocean-faring vessels, not exceeding 25,000 Dead Weight Tonnage





(DWT) capacity. Bangladesh, India and Indonesia are trying to avail this opportunity as all of them have abundant low waged labors. Moreover, they have skilled and semi-skilled labors in this sector for many decades. So far 30 industries (22 local, 07 joint venture and 01 hundred percent foreign owned) have registered with Board of Investment (BOI) with total proposed investment of around Taka 847 crore (US\$ 121 million) producing coastal cargoes, row ferries , tug boats, fishing trawlers, inland oil tankers and so on.

#### **Supply gap and opportunity for smaller ocean-faring shipbuilding:**

Huge supply gap for smaller ocean-faring ships has been created in the international market for different reasons. Some of the major reasons are:

- decreasing international trade volumes due to the current international economic crises as the smaller ships do not require the same operational cost as large vessels
- more than half the international fleet of smaller size is more than 20 years old and need to be replaced
- getting better profit, bigger shipbuilders moved from building smaller ocean-faring ships to super-ships, naval-ships, huge containerized ships and so on
- all the big shipbuilders in Korea , China, Taiwan, Singapore , and Japan are booked apparently for next ten years for building super-ships and the owners could not find



Shipyard of Western Marine Shipyard Ltd , Chittagong, Bangladesh

yards to build the smaller vessels in those countries.

The above factors eventually forced the owners to focus their attention to Bangladesh

for smaller ocean-faring ships.

**Skilled Workforce, Competitive Labor Cost and Linguistic Skills**



Shipbuilding Industrial Sector requires four different levels of skill. Unskilled labor is required at the bottom end. This is abundantly available at a lower cost. Most of the labor required is at the semi-skilled level, i.e. welders, pipe fitters, ship fitters, painters and so on. Bangladesh has an abundance of semi-skilled labor. At the third level, the sector requires junior engineers, foremen, and skilled technicians. There are about 171 polytechnic institutes in Bangladesh that produce thousands of junior engineers and foremen every year. At the top end, the sector requires highly skilled naval engineers, naval architects. The Department of Naval Architecture of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology produces naval engineers and naval architects every year. But this is not enough for this growing industry. Recently some Bangladeshis have been trained to the required level of skill from Europe.

The cost of semi-skilled labor ( welders, fitters) in Bangladesh is approximately 1/3 of that of China and 2/3 of that of Vietnam according to Germanischer Lloyds. Thus, this is a comparative advantage over other countries producing ocean-faring ships. English is widely spoken in Bangladesh, especially at managerial and supervisory level, where 90% of staff is fluent in English.

#### **Bangladeshi ship entering export market**

Coast-effective human resource in comparison with other shipbuilding nations and comparative advantages such as simple importation facility of raw materials , duty free market access for Bangladesh ships to other countries have encouraged the Bangladesh entrepreneurs of this sector to come forward in export business. Bangladesh got its first exposure of international shipbuilding in 1979, when High Speed Shipbuilding Engineers Co. Ltd. exported

eight grain carriers to Mitsui Engineering and Shipping Industry of Japan. It also built the barge- mounted power plant, oil tankers, first moving patrol boat for Navy and troops carrier for the Bangladesh Army. In 2005, Ananda Shipyards and Slipways Ltd secured the first order for ocean-faring vessels from a high end market like Denmark by competing with Chinese and Vietnamese shipbuilders and delivered the first ship in the first half of 2008. Later on, it received a number of orders and delivered , while a second company, Western Marine, has also received a significant number of orders and already delivered a ship. Ananda Shipyard has successfully built 5 ships for export to Holland and Mozambique. Moreover, 24 Multi Purpose Cargo Vessels are under construction having dead weight from 5500 DWT to 7250 DWT to export to Germany. The other shipbuilding giant 'Western Marine Shipyard' has also exported 01 Floating Reception Vessel to Finland. Moreover, 04 more 5200 DWT Multi Purpose Cargoes were exported by December 2010 to Germany. Another 12 vessels were exported to Pakistan, Germany and Denmark in 2011 & 2012. This has attracted other local investors to invest in this sector. Most of them are trying to upgrade their existing facilities to meet the international standards.

The market for small ocean-faring vessels grew significantly and is now estimated to be as big as US\$ 400 billion annually. Several sources are optimistic that Bangladesh could achieve at least 1% market share i.e. exports of as much as US\$ 4 billion annually. Moreover, it is





A Bangladeshi made Ship traversing the ocean.

estimated that shipbuilding industry could become the second biggest exporting industry in Bangladesh by 2015.

#### Why Bangladesh:

- Long shipbuilding history
- Ample supply of skilled labor
- Low cost, high productivity labor
- Labor's knowledge of English ( as compared to China / Vietnam)
- Accredited training institute to train artisans -All the small ships exported till date are regarded as of high quality - Repeat orders received by the

shipbuilders -Some spare, capacity currently available -There are a lot of dockyards that can be converted rapidly to build ocean faring vessels

- Simple importation facilities
- Green Channel Clearance Facilities
- Shipbuilding industry has been included in the export list and identified as a thrust sector in the national industrial policy 2010.
- Duty free market access for Bangladeshi ships to other countries
- 100% foreign equity is allowed.

#### Way forward:

Bangladesh offers favorable investment climate compared to other South Asian economies. Bangladesh has been deemed highly attractive and profitable considering the market size (Local & Global), duty free market access, cost-effective human resources and other costs & regulatory environment of investment in the shipbuilding industry in Bangladesh.

Board of Investment (BOI)  
Bangladesh

## IMPRESSIVE BANGLADESH

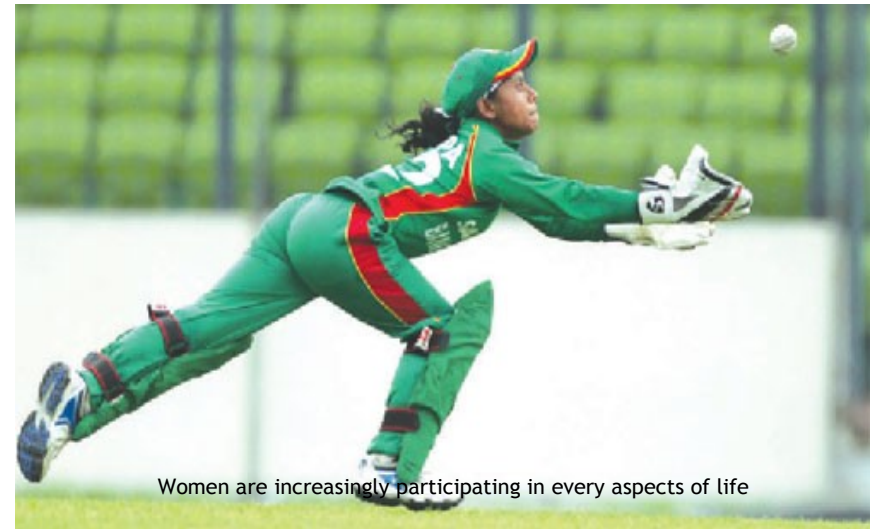
Faruque Hassan



Opening ceremony of T20 world cup 2014 in Dhaka

The incredible development of Bangladesh's readymade garment (RMG) industry over the last three decades has outshined the most optimistic expectations. After the war of liberation in 1971 Bangladesh inherited a shattered economy with industrial production came to near halt. The jute sector which was the sole foreign exchange earners could not keep-up longer than the mid-eighties. Since then the economy got the most needed footing on the ready-made garment industry. What happened till then is a history. During the last thirty years the RMG sector has become more than 79% export earning sector of the country, employed 4 million people directly in the industry and contributing more than 10% to GDP. The industry has branded Bangladesh among the top apparel manufacturing countries in the world as we ranked second largest among the clothing exporting countries. "Made in Bangladesh" has emerged as an icon in the global fashion retailing industry.

It was not an easy task at all, but the irresistible spirit of the entrepreneurs and the extra-ordinary qualities in our people made us conquer all the challenges so far. The successful elimination of child labor, rapid growth in post-MFA era, progress achieved in the -



Women are increasingly participating in every aspects of life





Encouraging signs for Bangladesh's Cricket

social compliance - are just to mention a few.

Even during the global economic recession, while almost all the major economies in the world were hurt, it could not bring the predicted demise in our garment exports. Rather we foresee a brighter future for the industry ahead and preparing ourselves for catering the increased demand of buyers, as well as to move up to higher-end products.

Simultaneous to the success in the textile and garment industry, an extraordinary improvement has taken place

in the macro and socio-economic context, which was possible mainly due to the rapid industrialization and our increasing integration into the global economy. The table-1 illustrates an impressive snapshot of Bangladesh.

Dwelling in a situation with lot of hurdles and challenges, we have been ranked as one of the next emerging nations in the world. Moody's and S&P rated Bangladesh stable in sovereign credit rating. JP Morgan included Bangladesh in their 'Frontier Five' in its report 'From Ho Chi Minh Trail to Mexico', April 2007. Goldman Sachs included Bangladesh in its 'Next 11' after the BRIC



Bangladesh women playing Billiard

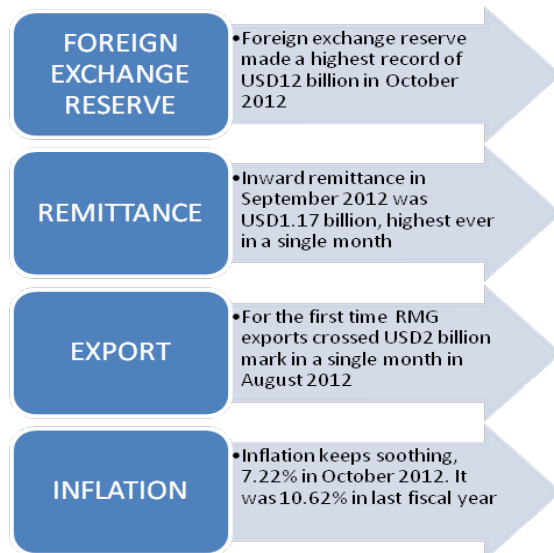
nations (Brazil, Russia, India and China).

### Economy looks promising

While the global economy is still struggling to revive the following achievements looks outstanding and a great source of confidence for us:

### Economy better than expected

The importance of the readymade



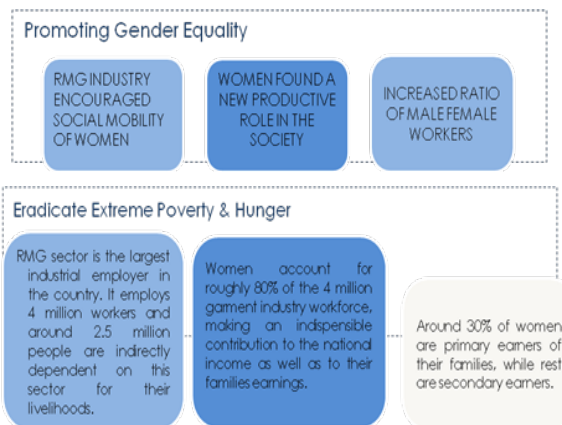
garment (RMG) industry in spearheading the economic progress in the country cannot be over-emphasized. The industry provided major opportunity for families to rise up from poverty. Following chart shows how RMG industry is helping the development of Bangladesh.

Table-1: Impressive Bangladesh

|   | Bangladesh |      | India | Pakistan |
|---|------------|------|-------|----------|
| Per capita income (PPP\$)               | 1990       | 540  | 874   | 1200     |
|   | 2011       | 1909 | 3663  | 2786     |
| Life expectancy at birth, years         | 1990       | 59   | 58    | 61       |
|   | 2010       | 69   | 65    | 65       |
| Infant deaths per 1000 live births      | 1990       | 97   | 81    | 95       |
|   | 2011       | 37   | 47    | 59       |
| Maternal deaths per 100,000 live births | 1990       | 800  | 600   | 490      |
|   | 2010       | 194  | 200   | 260      |
| Female Literacy Rate                    | 1991       | 38   | 49    | na       |
|   | 2009       | 77   | 74    | 61       |
| Female labor force participation rate   | 1990       | na   | 35    | 14       |
|   | 2010       | 57   | 29    | 22       |

### Empowering women

The most important revolution has happened in the area of bringing women in to the mainstream of the economy, engaging them in wage employment, and thus in a moderate Muslim country the industry has brought a silent revolution through empowering women. The working girls remit



money for their sibling's education and other purposes this is pulling up the rate of literacy and participation in primary education. Around 30% of women are primary earners of their families, while rests are secondary earners. Study shows that if 0.35-0.40 Million women lose their jobs, at least 1.6 million members of households face further economic hardship.

Women are increasingly participating in family decision-making with a strong voice. Most working women can now chose when to get married or become mothers. As a result the number of early marriages is decreasing; so is the birth rate.

### Gender equality

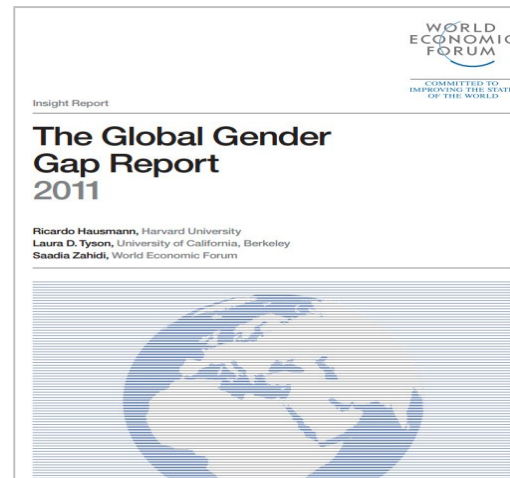


Bangladesh has a tradition of craftsmanship in clay pottery. A Girl is decorating a clay pot



If we look back in the 1990s, roughly one-quarter of country's female workers entered into the labour market in industry. According to the labour force statistics the female labour participation rate increased from 23.9% in 1999-200 to 36% in 2010. During the mid 90s the female share of new employment in industry was 39%, which rose to 60 per cent in 2000 primarily employed in RMG industry.

Bangladesh ranked 69 out of 135 countries in the World Economic Forum's 2011 Global Gender Gap Report; performed better than much richer countries



Reproductive Rights, Safe Motherhood, Family Planning and related issues. The program has been successfully able to enable the women workers in making family decisions, as a result early marriage and birth rate has become low among the garment workers. They are now aware to keep free from different virus & diseases. Bangladesh was awarded by UB for the outstanding achievements in Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

### Bangladesh: An Indomitable Nation

The history of our civilization and regional dominance dates back to 1204 CE that earned us the name "Golden Bengal". The liberation in 1971 destroyed our infrastructure, but not the morale. We are back on our feet. Bangladesh is a proud nation. Rabindranath Tagore, the first Asian

### Improvements in reproductive health

Reproductive health is an indispensable part of our sustainable development. Garment workers mostly aged between 19 and 24 and migrants from the rural areas with poverty and low literacy -- are perilously exposed to reproductive health issues and diseases like HIV/AIDS, STI, RTI and Hepatitis-B. Particularly, warding off an AIDS outbreak in the garment sector is crucial in terms of the fiercely competitive nature of the international apparel trade. Therefore, to impart knowledge about these issues among the garment workers through workplace interventions and leave them better equipped to prevent the disease BGMEA runs several programs with

UNFPA, WHO, Marie Stopes, Population Council and Asiatic MCL. These programs are aimed to build awareness among the workers for their Reproductive Health,



# HAPPY PLANET INDEX

**Bangladesh is  
the 11th happiest  
country among 151  
countries in the  
world, and happiest**

to win the Nobel Prize, is the son of this soil. February 21 and December 16 are our inspiration. We are proud of Salman Khan, a Bangladeshi American, for his academy "Khan Academy" to provide "a free world class education to anyone, anywhere"; Maqsoodul Alam innovated the jute genome sequencing; Shuvo Roy and his team innovated the first artificial kidney. Our boy Shakib Al Hasan is one of the best all-rounder in international cricket in recent years; Mount Everest conquerors Musa Ibrahim, Nishat Majumder and Wasfia Nazreen; successful golfer Siddique Rahman; and of course the 4 million garment workers who brought more

than 19 billion dollar to home last year - are our capability, sincerity, courage and confidence. Bangladesh is no more a "basket case", nor a country of floods and famines. Our achievements tell our ability, and how much more we could achieve.

## **Gorbo: Musical talent hunt program for RMG Workers**

The people of Bangladesh are born with amazing traits and spirits; they are exceptionally talented. Gorbo provides the platform to the workers to discover their hidden talents that eventually make them confident and ambitious. GORBO was first organized in late 2010 for the first time; around 40,000 workers participated in the first round audition and through the process of 9 rounds over a period of 6 months we got the most expected 10 performers for the Grand Finale that was held in February 2011. The winner was rewarded with Tk. 1 million as prize money, and following two performers got 300 thousand taka and 200 thousand taka respectively. Betting inspired by tremendous response and appreciation that BGMEA has already launched the second edition of Gorbo.

## **Opportunities Ahead**

Bangladesh is on the verge of incredible opportunity in regards to its RMG exports. Global fashion brands, buyers and retailers are looking for alternate to China, since the country is undertaking a massive restructure from low-end bulk production to more sophisticated, high-tech and high value-

added industries. Bangladesh has all the strengths and potentials to make it a first choice. Besides, the recent progress in exports to new markets is another source of opportunities for us. Exports to non-traditional markets has also seen quite a good increase over the last 3 years, particularly in Japan, China, India, South Korea, South Africa, Russia, Brazil, Mexico and Chile. The ray of hope does also come from the developments in international trade policy arena, particularly the simplification of GSP rules of origin by EU, Japan, Norway, Switzerland and duty free market access by China, and preferential access to China, Korea and Malaysia. We are optimistic that the new wave of opportunities and the growth momentum will energize the RMG industry to add some new success stories in the coming years.

Needless to say that the potential of industrialization and opportunities to grow need more steps, strategies and action plans on addressing issues like skilled workers and mid-management professional shortage, electricity-gas supply, road-rail-port infrastructure, trade financing, etc. If all these issues can be addressed immediately we are confident make more than 30% annual growth in the coming years. A prosperous Bangladesh is not far away and we have to use our potentials being united.

The writer is the former Vice President,  
BGMEA





## Digital Bangladesh

Architect Yeafesh Osman

The Bengalee nation had a dream, which was shown by the greatest Bengalee of all times - the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. We achieved our independence through a war of liberation after a long stretch of movements and struggle in order to realize that dream. Half of that dream has now materialized, but our struggle for freedom or economic emancipation is yet to be crowned with success. The dream of a Golden Bangla is yet to be attained. Bangabandu's daughter and leader of the masses Sheikh Hasina had declared a pledge to build a Digital Bangladesh based on 'Vision-2021' in the election manifesto of 2008, keeping in mind her father's dream. The main idea of a Digital Bangladesh is to groom the nation as a knowledge-based middle- income country by the year 2021 through utilization of technologies. It aspires for a poverty and hunger-free Bangladesh through overall uplift of the living standard of Bangla's inhabitants.





The development vision of Sheikh Hasina has striven to bring backward segments of the country's population to the mainstream by offering them additional assistance. In order to materialize that, our objective has been to build a Digital Bangladesh by involving all citizens of the country. Technology is considered /A path for progress / Digital Bangladesh / will be for all our masses.

We feel more encouraged when we hear from the IT technologists of the present generation: "Digital Bangladesh is not a distant world. It is our own world. It is merely a guarantee for becoming more developed, speedier and acquiring more sensitive technology at affordable prices. Again, it also implies different worlds for different individuals. For a student, it is an assurance for obtaining high quality education. For a farmer, it is a guarantee for

The present government has worked relentlessly during the past two years for achieving that objective. It is a matter of satisfaction that the use of technology, especially that of information technology, has increased substantially due to the involvement of the masses in sincere endeavours of the government. People have realized that positive changes were taking place in their lives due to application of technology. I consider it to be a huge success of the government. The government has succeeded in creating a space of confidence among the citizenry.







Use of computer technology in every sphere of our economic and social lives

a market for the crops he produces. For a sick man, it is a guarantee for getting good treatment, freedom from standing in the queue day after day. For a government employee, it is the best medium for communication and evaluation of his work. For a pensioner, a freedom fighter and a widow, it is a guarantee for obtaining safety allowances and pensions with transparency. The main theme in the philosophy of Digital Bangladesh is to ensure the empowerment of people through optimum utilization of technology, establishment of good governance and above all to meet the needs of all citizens at their doorsteps. Digital Bangladesh will be implemented for the welfare of all citizens irrespective of their wealth or status.”

The ICT Policy was adopted in April soon after formation of the present government. A total of 306 action plans were taken up in its main programme for implementation. The policy has fixed immediate steps, medium-term measures and

long-term actions for all ministries. As a result, all bodies of the government are getting ready for e-governance. The Ministry

of Science and Information & Communication Technology is coordinating the whole endeavour.



Digital Bangladesh—going beyond the rhetoric



Those who are working and providing leadership to the administrative and service sectors of the government have to think anew. They will have to find out how services can be ensured for the country's 150 million people. We do not want the people to move from door to door of administration for services; rather, we want services to reach the doorsteps of the citizens. We have for the first time succeeded in presenting our good intentions before the people. You have noticed, that even the secretaries of ministries were now telling the people what they would do for the common man during the coming year. These are big changes. We also witnessed during the digital fair that a canopy of honest competition has been put in place among the concerned ministries in this

Many of you have witnessed the digital innovation fair held at Bangabandhu Novo-theatre earlier this year. Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had inaugurated the fair. Local and foreign policy-makers, experts and officials from over hundred organizations were present at the inauguration. Explaining the significance of digital Bangladesh, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had said then, "It implied paying bills through mobile phones, buying railway tickets from home, getting healthcare from Upazila level doctors while staying in the village. "She further said that we had made a pledge before the election to build a digital Bangladesh". We have chosen information technology as a tool to fulfill that commitment. We seek to ensure transparency, accountability and good governance at all layers of administration.







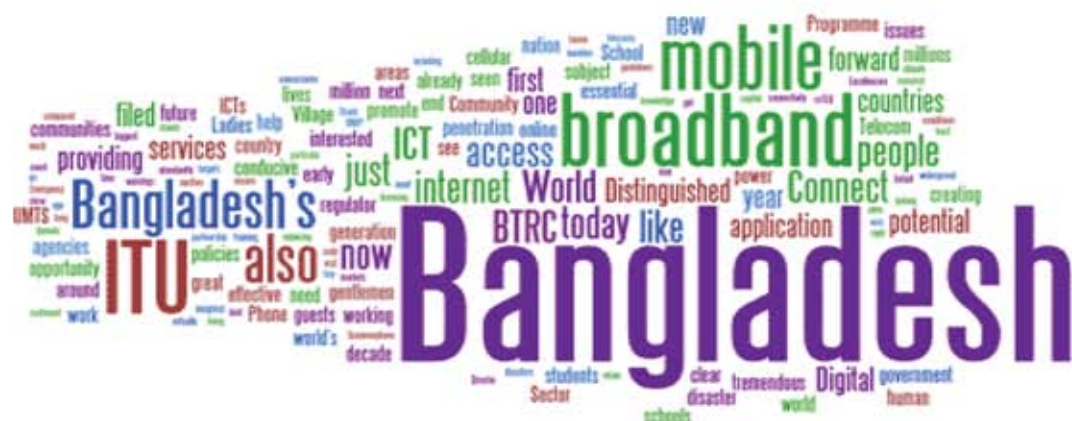
Bangabandhu Novo Theatre—enabling visitors to soar into space as well as experience the thrills of an interplanetary journey in a three-dimensional environment

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

I have a firm conviction that people's interest in technology, especially information technology, has increased because of these developments. As a consequence, the number of mobile-phone users has increased by over 20 million during the past two years. And at governmental level, we were also inspired to establish 4,501 union information service centers throughout the country. Even unions without electricity supply have not been left out. Besides, information centers have also been

set up a 125 Upazilas and information portals were launched for 64 districts. We are optimistic that by the grace of Almighty, we shall succeed in building a digital Bangladesh as desired by Bangabandhu's daughter, before the year 2021.

The writer is the State Minister for Science and Technology, Government of Bangladesh.





## Bangladesh

### A Unique Destination for Tourists

Blessed with scenic beauty, low hills, forest, large lakes, beautiful rivers in deltaic plains, the longest beach on earth, a God-gifted geo-strategic location between SAARC and ASEAN and a homogeneous culture, Bangladesh is an ideal place for tourists. It has a host of tourist treasures to offer to the international tourists - beaches, lakes, rivers, hills, forests, wildlife, tribal life, archaeological remains, including historical monuments, folklore, religious and cultural heritage, handicrafts and much more. It has the world's longest sea beach of the world and some archaeological sites representing ancient Buddhist civilization.

In recent times with the gradual development of infrastructure facilities and increasing exposition, Bangladesh is fast emerging as an attractive tourist spot on the global map. Our tourist attractions are widely spread throughout the country. The country's historical legacy is composed of various strands, including Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist and British.





Partial view of Central Railway Station, Komola Pur, Dhaka



Ahsan Manzil—Magnificent palace of the Nawabs of Dhaka, on the bank of the river Buriganga

There are 7 divisions and 64 districts in Bangladesh. The major tourist spots of Bangladesh are in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Cox's Bazar, Khulna, Comilla, Barisal and Sylhet.

There are many tourist packages which offer different kinds of sightseeing opportunities. You can get cheap deals on flights to Dhaka throughout the year, and once there, the cost of living is amongst the lowest in the world, making Dhaka, and Bangladesh as a whole amongst the best value destinations in the world. A few interesting and a must see destinations are listed below.

#### Sights in and around Dhaka city

The 400 years of Dhaka City was celebrated in 2008. The city was founded in 1608 as the seat of the Mughal viceroys of Bengal and known world over for centuries for its fine muslin. Dhaka has now grown into a bustling city of over 15 million people and serves as the nation's capital. It is known as the city of Mosques. Some of its outstanding ancient monuments are Lalbag Fort (built in 1778 AD), Paribibi's Tomb (1678 AD), Bara Katra, Hussini Dalan, Star Mosque, Satgambuss (Seven-domed) Mosque(1680 AD, and Dakeswari Temple.

The Central Shaeed Minar commemorates the martyrs of the historic language movement of 1952. Bhahadur Shah Park, the memorial for the heroes of Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. The National Museum houses an excellent collection of archaeological finds, sculptures and paintings. Architectural trends, both traditional and contemporary, are reflected in Curzon Hall, High Court and new Supreme Court Building. The National Memorial at Shavar commemorating the martyrs of the Liberation War of 1971 and Martyred Intellectuals' Memorial at Rayerbazar in memory of the martyred intellectuals of Liberation War stands out with its own uniqueness.



Dhaka National Museum, at Shahbag, Dhaka

The oldest section of the city runs along the north bank of the waterfront and was developed when Dhaka was a significant Moghul trading centre. A must-see in the Old City is the area between the two main water transport terminals, Sadarghat and Badam Toli where the panorama of river life on the Buriganga is particularly fascinating. Along the waterfront is the old baroque-style palace, Ahsan Manzil which has been painted bright pink. Sonargaon, is located about 20 miles east of Dhaka, was capital of the region between 13th and early 17th centuries and retains historical relics of interest. Rajendrapur National Park, 30 miles north of capital is noted for varied bird life.

### Chittagong

The second largest city of Bangladesh and a busiest sea port in Bangladesh. Its green hills, forests and sea-beaches attract holiday makers. Many of the heavy, medium and light industries are located here. These include jute, cotton, textile, automobile, fertilizer, engineering, chemical, tobacco, timber and tannery industries.



Lalbagh Fort, 17th Century Mughal Fort Complex,







Golpata(*Nypa fruticans*) grows abundantly along the creeks of Sundarbans.



A majestic Royal Bengal Tiger

The country's only steel mill and oil refinery are also located here. Places of interest in and around Chittagong include Shahi Jame Mosque, Chandpura Mosque, Sitakunda Hindu and Buddhist temples, Foys lake etc. The Shahi Jama-e-masjid and Qadam Mubarak Mosque are two of the most impressive buildings in the city. It's also worth visiting the Ethnological Museum in the Modern City which has interesting displays on Bangladesh's tribal peoples.

#### **Cox's Bazar**

Miles of golden sands, towering cliffs, surfing waves, rare conch shells, colorful pagodas, delightful sea food - this is Cox's Bazar, the tourist capital of Bangladesh. Here the world's longest unbroken smooth straight 120 km long clean sandy beach slopes gently down to the blue waters of the Bay of Bengal with a background of chain hills covered with deep green forests.

The amazing beauty of the golden sun setting behind the waves of the sea is very charming. The attractive local variety of handloom products of the Rakhyne tribal families are good buys. Their unique way of life and costumes attract visitors. Cox's Bazar tourist resort has a Golf course in addition to varied other tourist facilities.

Visits to the attractive spots at Inani, Himchari, Teknaf, the southern most tip of Bangladesh, Buddhist temple at Ramu and nearby islands of Sonadia, Moheshkhali and coral island St. Martin are memorable experience of a lifetime.





A panoramic view of Kaptai lake, Rangamati



Cox's Bazar- Longest natural sea beach in the world

### **Kuakata**

It is the only beach in Asia where one can enjoy both clear sunrise and the sunset in their entire majestic splendor. Kuakata in Patuakhali district is one of the few tourist spots in Bangladesh where nature survives in pristine, unspoiled grace. With its unspoiled vast sea shore along groves of coconut trees, colorful Rakhyne tribal life, Shima Temple having 70 feet high statue of Buddha, the highest in Asia, thousands of varieties of fish and the holy yearly Hindu Rush festival are added attractions in Kuakata for the visitors.

### **Chittagong Hill Tract Districts**

The three hill districts of Rangamati, Banderban and Khagrachari are inhabited by number of distinctive enterprising tribes like the Chakmas, the Tripuras, the Murang and the Marmas - all preserving their age old cultures, colorful rituals, dances and music. Here the glistening greenery sits on the purple hills around lakes-manmade and natural.



A panoramic view of Madhabkundu Water fall in South East of Sylhet, Rangamati





Sea Beach at Kuakata.



St. Martin a Coral Island at the Southern most tip of Bangladesh



Mainamoti an important center of Buddhist culture from the 7th to 12th centuries

## Sylhet

Sylhet is known as the "land of two leaves and a bud", with its terraced tea gardens, rolling countryside, colourful Khasia and Manipuri tribes, eye-catching orange groves and pineapple plantations, tropical jungles and exotic flora and fauna will attract you. Sylhet tea is used the world over. The gardens in the area produce millions of pounds of tea every year, mostly for export. The district is also known, for its delicious pineapples and oranges. Maulvi Bazar, Chaftak, Jafalong and Fenchuganj are some of the other interesting places to visit. It is also known as the land of the famous Muslim saint Hazrat Shah Jalal (RA) the great torch bearer of Islam to this region. Sylhet is also well-known for its wide variety of exquisite hand-crafted products made out of cane and bamboo. Sylhet is linked with Dhaka by rail, road and air.





A few five star Hotels in Dhaka

### **Srimongol**

Srimongol is known as the tea capital of Bangladesh. For miles and miles in all directions, the visitor can see the tea gardens spread like a green carpet over low lying land and slopping hills. A visit to the tea plantation in Sylhet, especially in Srimongol is a memorable experience.

### **Jaflong-Tamabil**

Situated amidst splendid panorama, Tamabil is a border outpost on the Sylhet-Shilong Road, about 55 km away from Sylhet town. Besides enchanting views of the area, one can also catch a glimpse of rolling stones across the border from Tamabil. Jaflong is a scenic spot nearby with tea gardens and beautiful rolling hills.

### **Madhabkundu Waterfall**

A three hour drive south-east of Sylhet and about three km from Dakshinbagh Railway

station there is famous remote waterfall of madhabkunda which attracts large number of tourists every year.

### **Mainamoti**

The most attractive tourist spot in Comilla is Mainamati. About eight kilometers west of the town among the range of low hills known as Mainamati-Lalmai ridge. It is famous as an important centre of Buddhist culture from the 7th to 12th centuries; the buildings excavated here were made wholly of baked bricks. Nearby is a museum housing the finds excavated here, which include terracota plaques, bronze statues, a bronze casket, coins, jewelries and votive stapes embossed with Buddhist inscriptions.

### **Khulna**

Located about 320 kms south-west of Dhaka, Khulna is the country's third biggest city. It serves as the gateway to the port of

Mongla and Sundarbans. A journey by paddle steamer from Dhaka to Khulna along the southern river system running through the green countryside is an unforgettable experience. About 32 kms from Khulna are the popular tourist attractions of Khan Jahan Ali's 60 domed ancient Mosque (1459 AD) and his mausoleum at Bagerhat.

### **Eco-Tourism Spots: Sundarbans**

Bangladesh owns the largest mangrove forest on earth, the Sundarbans-the home of the majestic Royal Bengal Tiger. About 6000 sq. km. of deltaic swamps along the coastal belt of Khulna, the Sundarbans is also the natural habitat of spotted deer, crocodiles, monkeys, cheetahs, pythons, wild boars and different species of colorful birds making it a paradise for the eco-tourist.



Left : Bangladesh Ambassador receives the Chief Guest of Bangladesh National Day Reception 2013, HRH Prince Turki bin Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, Vice-Governor of Riyadh Region.

#### A FEW ACTIVITIES OF THE MISSION

Below left : HRH Prince Turki bin Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz in a cake cutting ceremony on the occasion of Bangladesh National Day reception 2013





A segment of the guest attending the Bangladesh National Day Reception 2013







A segment of the guest attending the Bangladesh National Day Reception 2013











Observance of International National Mother Language Day and Great Martyrs Day 2014







Celebration of 94th Birth Anniversary of the Father of Nation and National Children Day 2014







Bangladesh Embassy organized discussion meeting and cultural program on occasion of the Victory Day 2013







Celebrating the Bangali New Year famously known as Pohela Boishakh at the Bangladesh House







Observance of the National Mourning Day by Bangladesh Embassy on 15 August 2013



Observance of International Migration Day by Bangladesh Embassy on 18 December 2013





Bangladesh Embassy Participated in the yearly event of OLG Bazar in Riyadh organized by Oriental Ladies Group







Hon'ble Chief Guest cutting cake at the National Day Reception 2013 hosted by Bangladesh Consulate General, Jeddah.

Advisor to the Hon'ble Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Gowher Rizvi addressing at the National Day Reception 2013 hoisted by Bangladesh Consulate General, Jeddah, 26 March 2013.

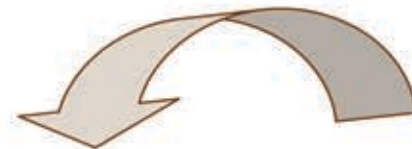
Consuls General of different countries and other high Saudi officials at the National Day Reception 2013 hosted by Consulate General, Jeddah

Consul General of Bangladesh Mr. Md. Nazmul Islam hoisting National Flag on occasion of Victory Day 2013.

Bangladesh Consul General placing flower bouquet on the occasion of Victory Day 2013







Observance of International Mother Language Day & Great Martyrs Day 2014 by Consulate General in Jeddah

Consul General of Bangladesh Mr. Md. Nazmul Islam addressing the International Migration Day meeting Jeddah, 18 December 2013

Bangladesh Consulate General Participated in the Asian Film Festival in Jeddah 2014

Bangladesh Ambassador Md. Shahidul Islam accompanied by Consul General in Jeddah received first batch of Hajjis at King Abdul Aziz International Airport, Jeddah

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Celebrating the 43rd anniversary of Independence & National Day of Bangladesh



*Alaque Contracting & Trading Group  
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community in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the auspicious  
occasion of the 43rd anniversary of the Independence  
and National Day of Bangladesh*

**Mohammed Muzammel Haque**  
Managing Director  
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# Celebrating the 43rd anniversary of Independence & National Day of Bangladesh



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*We express our deepest gratitude to the Custodian  
of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah  
bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud for giving the opportunity  
of Iqama transfer of Bangladesh nationals  
and*

*We also congratulate our Hon'ble Prime Minister  
Sheikh Hasina for being elected for the third term.*



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*Best wishes on the occasion of Independence &  
National Day of Bangladesh*



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Mujibnagar Monument at Meherpur