

-Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia, Mr. Dean Thompson

- Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

01. Assalamu alaikum and good evening.

02. It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the celebration of the Victory Day of Bangladesh. On this day in 1971, we achieved our long-cherished victory after a prolong armed struggle against the Pakistani occupation forces.

03. On this happy moment, I recall with profound reverence the founding Father of Bangladesh, the greatest Bengali of all times, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who led the entire nation

to freedom. I pay my respect to the 3 million martyrs and two hundred thousand dishonored mothers and sisters of the war of independence. Bangladesh stands on the sacrifice of these martyrs and the valor and bravery of our freedom fighters, the greatest sons of the soil.

04. This year's victory day celebration coincides with the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Golden Jubilee of Bangladesh's independence. These are rare occasions in our history and make this victory day celebration even more significant.

05. The Father of the Nation dreamt of a *Sonar Bangla* or Golden Bengal – where all citizens irrespective of their religion, ethnicity, or gender will enjoy equal rights and dignity, and together they will create a society free of poverty, hunger, oppression, and economic

disparity. That dream remained unrealized as the Father of the Nation was brutally assassinated by cowardly conspirators in 1975. Decades later, Bangabandhu's worthy daughter Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina took up that unfinished task. During the last one decade under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh has made extraordinary socio-economic progress. During this period our economic growth has been one of the highest in the world, our per capita income has gone up many times, and millions of people have been freed from abject poverty. Bangladesh's progress is noticeable in every area including macroeconomics, agriculture, education, health, communications, information technology, infrastructure, power, and rural economy. Various mega projects like Padma Bridge, Matarbari deep seaport, Dhaka Metro Rail and elevated expressway are in their final stages, which will significantly enhance the connectivity within the country and in the region. All these have contributed to the progress and prosperity not only for Bangladesh

but has also contributed to the idea of shared prosperity of South Asia.

06. Peace and stability are a prerequisite of economic development and social progress. For this, the government of Bangladesh has adopted a 'zero tolerance' policy to combat militancy, terrorism, repression on women and drugs menaces. The government is committed to upholding the secular and progressive ethos of the society and in maintaining religious and communal harmony in the country despite provocations. The brave and professional members of our defense forces and law enforcement forces are doing an excellent job to keep our land and waters free from internal and external threats.

07. Bangladesh's foreign policy is based on the principle of "Friendship to all, malice towards none", as enunciated by our Father of the Nation. Bangladesh believes in world peace and

harmony. We have set a unique example of humanity in the global arena by providing shelter to millions of forcibly displaced Rohingyas from Myanmar. We are also largest troop contributing country to the UN peacekeeping operations, thereby promoting international peace and stability.

08. With the United States, our relationship is strong and multifaceted. We recognize and value each other as important partners in many areas including trade and investment, counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism, climate change, disaster management, women empowerment, global security, and UN peacekeeping. We share the same vision for a free, open, and inclusive Indo-pacific region. The year 2022 marks the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh-US bilateral relations. We very much look forward to celebrating this milestone event with great vigor and enthusiasm. The Government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is willing to work closely with the Biden administration by

setting aside any differences. I believe our countries will be able to strengthen and advance the relationship further in the spirit of friendship and partnership.

09. Long live Bangladesh-USA friendship. I thank you all.