06 December 2021, Embassy of Bangladesh, Washington, D.C.

- Ms. Sumona Guha, Senior Director for South Asia at the White House National Security Council,
- Amb. Kelly Keiderling, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia,
- Distinguished Guests, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

01. Assalamu alaikum, Namste, and good evening.
02. It is my great pleasure to welcome all of you to the joint celebration of Moitri Dibosh or Friendship Day between Bangladesh and India. On this day of 06 December 1971, India recognized Bangladesh as an independent country. The day symbolizes the strong bond of friendship between Bangladesh and India.
03. This celebration of the Friendship Day is taking place at a time when Bangladesh is celebrating the 100th birth anniversary of its Founding Father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the 50th anniversary of the country’s independence. This is also the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh-India friendship. All these make this celebration a special one. Let me take this opportunity to express our thanks to Ambassador of India His Excellency Mr. Taranjit Singh Sandhu and his team for their invaluable support for this joint celebration.
04. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen: Bangladesh came into existence as an independent country on 26 March 1971 with the declaration of independence by our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. However, it took nine months of armed struggle and the sacrifice of millions of lives to achieve the final victory against the Pakistani occupation forces. In those difficult days, India came forward with all-out support for the Bengali freedom fighters in their struggle for independence. India also accommodated nearly 10 million Bengali refugees during the critical days of our independence.
05. On this auspicious occasion, I pay my deep tribute to the memory of the founding father of Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, whose unwavering leadership united and mobilized the entire nation in their fight for independence. I also pay my respect to the 3 million martyrs of our war of liberation, and to the 1,650 Indian soldiers who fought side by side with our freedom fighters and gave their life. Indeed, the basis of Bangladesh-India friendship is forged in blood and sacrifice.
06. Over the years, Bangladesh-India friendship has deepened, matured, and expanded. The Hon’ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh H. E. Sheikh Hasina in her message on the occasion has stressed the need for re-committing to work for strengthening further the 50 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries - by concentrating on people-to-people contact, trade, business and connectivity. She also noted with satisfaction that despite unavoidable restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our relationship at all levels have remained stable and strong. This was evident in our excellent cooperation and collaboration in dealing with the COVID 19 pandemic.
The strength of our relationship is also visible through regular exchange of visits by our highest political leaderships. The Indian Prime Minister His Excellency Shri Narendra Modi visited Bangladesh on 26-27 March this year. The Hon’ble President of India His Excellency Shri Ram Nath Kovind is expected to visit Bangladesh on 16 December, the Victory Day of Bangladesh.
08. Ladies and gentlemen: From a war-ravaged country in 1971, Bangladesh has today evolved into a “land of opportunity”. Bangladesh under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has experienced massive socio-economic transformation. Bangladesh is now one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Our economy grew over 5% even during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have made remarkable progress in poverty alleviation, food production, empowering women, girls’ education, and many other areas. Bangladesh has been able to establish itself as a progressive and secular democracy that makes significant contribution to regional and international peace and security.
09. All these achievements are taking us closer to the fulfillment of the dream of our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to establish a prosperous “Sonar Bangla (Golden Bengal)” - a polity free of poverty, hunger, oppression, and economic disparity. Now that Bangladesh has fulfilled all the conditions for graduation from an LDC to a developing country, the country is aspiring to become a developed economy by 2041.
10. **Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:** The last 50 years of Bangladesh-India relations demonstrate that it is not only beneficial for these two countries but also is a key element in advancing greater peace, stability, and development in the region. Both Bangladesh and India have robust partnerships with the United States. We share the same vision for a free, open, and inclusive Indo-pacific region. I believe our countries will continue to work together to achieve a prosperous South Asia and advance common goals in the region and beyond through mutual support and cooperation.
11. Long live Bangladesh-India Friendship. Long live Bangladesh-USA Friendship. I thank you all.