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Hon. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressed the opening ceremony of the 13th United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (Unctad XIII) at the Qatar National Conference Centre on 21 April 2012. In her speech the Hon. Prime Minister underscored the need for massive global reforms in present economic and financial governance side by side with a strong political will for betterment of all.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said, as we try to find solution, we must accept the fact that the present economic and financial governance requires wide ranging reforms which has to be inclusive. Stressing multilateral process for the good of all in a globalised world, the Bangladesh Prime Minister pointed out that hard political choices are needed for solutions in issues such as food security and climate change adaptation. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina emphasized that the least developed countries (LDCs) should be offered debt cancellation, debt relief and overseas development assistance (ODA) as the advanced nations pledged in the past.

Regarding special and differential treatment (S&DT) to the least developed countries in global trade, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina pointed out that trade liberalisation must facilitate flow of resources and technology, create of jobs and enhance productivity in the impoverished parts of the world. "We see imbalances between agriculture and non-agriculture, financial and non-financial sectors, rural and urban societies, private and public sectors, the rich and the poor, and the developed and the developing countries," she noted. On the issue of global warming Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said that the LDCs need
a collective response based on equity with focus on historical and current responsibility, per capita green house gas emission, respective capabilities, development requirements, extent of vulnerability etc. "Since resource is vital for implementation of the adaptation and mitigation plans, new and additional funds under fast-track finance and the operation of the Green Climate Fund are of urgent need," she said.

**GOOD GOVERNANCE**

**Record 17pc growth in tax receipts**

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) recorded 17 percent growth in tax collection in the eight months through February from a year ago. Revenue receipts rose to Tk 53,855 crore in July-February from Tk 45,838 crore in the same period of last year, according to NBR data. The latest receipt was higher than NBR's collection target of Tk 53,346 crore until February 2012.

Buoyancy in income tax receipts as well as improvements in the collection of customs duty and VAT (value added tax) allowed the tax administration to register figures higher than target for the period. NBR officials link growth in revenue receipts to the tax collector's efforts, including formation of two taskforces to prevent tax-dodging.

**Accreditation Council For Private Universities : Rules approved**

The government has approved in principle draft rules of Accreditation Council for Private Universities of Bangladesh (ACPUB) to ensure quality and standard of education of private universities. The ministry of education in its meeting of 23 April 2012 chaired by Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid approved the draft rules. According to the draft rules, the ACPUB would motivate private universities to undertake self-assessment and critical review of their academic programmes. The council
would urge the private universities to seek evaluation of their academic programmes through peer review teams to be formed by ACPUB. The result of the peer review team will be made public so that students, guardians, and employers can know about the status of different universities.

The draft stipulates that the new private universities will have to get the council's membership within six months of receiving permission from the government. Each university must submit a filled-in self-assessment questionnaire prescribed by ACPUB within six months of becoming members of the council. Educationists hope that the rules' successful implementation would contribute to enhancing the overall academic standard of the private universities.

**ECONOMY & BUSINESS**

**Tourism university to be set up soon**

The government plans to set up "World Tourism University (WTU)" to create skilled human resources in the tourism and hospitality industry. One acre of land has recently been earmarked in the city's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar for this. Entrepreneurs from the UK, USA, Canada and China have already shown interest to invest. Hon. Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Lt Col (retd) Faruk Khan, MP expects that University will contribute to generating more employment in the tourism sector and brighten Bangladesh’s image abroad.

**RMG export orders pour in**

Major garment makers expect a boost in exports as the US economy is rebounding and orders are shifting from China to Bangladesh. Exporters say that international brands are placing more orders with their Bangladeshi partners when China, the largest apparel exporting country, has become expensive for them. Knitwear exports rose by 8.73 percent to $6.30 billion and woven garment exports by 22.2 percent to $6.27 billion in July-February, from the same period of last year.

Apparel exports picked up in March as the shipment of clothes for the autumn-winter season in the western world has started. A shift in orders from China to Bangladesh, for cost competitiveness, is a major reason behind the rise in exports. Some major US buyers are coming with large orders to Bangladesh which were previously operating mostly
in China. Exporters hope that the sector's growth will remain steady as fresh orders are coming from Japan, India, Turkey, South Africa, Australia, Brazil, Mexico, Russia, China and Korea. In order for Bangladesh to take full advantage of the growing demand, impediments such as weak infrastructure and poor port management need to be improved immediately.

**IMF to provide Bangladesh $987m loan for improving reserve**

The International Monetary Fund has approved a $987 million loan to Bangladesh to help the country overcome macroeconomic pressures and build a buffer reserve. Bangladesh will immediately receive $141 million, and will get the rest of the amount in six equal installments under IMF's extended credit facility (ECF). IMF officials say that the amount represents the largest loan ever offered to a member country under the IMF's reformed concessional lending architecture. This amount is expected to help Bangladesh reduce imbalances and maintain a sustainable balance of payments over the medium term.

**Five new economic zones to be set up**

The government has decided to set up five economic zones in the country to drive industrialisation and enhance the living standards of rural people by creating jobs.

The decision was taken at the first meeting of the governing board of Bangladesh Economic Zone Authority (BEZA) at the Prime Minister's Office on April 18, 2012 with Hon. Prime Minister in the chair. The economic zones will be set up in Anwara upazila and Mirsarai of Chittagong, Sherpur of Moulvibazar, Mongla of Bagerhat and in areas near Bangabandhu Bridge in Sirajganj. The five economic zones are part of the government's plan to set up economic zones in all seven divisions. The meeting also decided to set up more economic zones in other places. The purpose of the economic zones is to expedite massive economic development in remote areas, alleviate poverty, set up agro-based industries and food processing plants for increasing the country's export basket and creating jobs. The Hon. Prime Minister directed the authorities to be careful about maintaining the environment of the areas as well to try to minimise the losses of the local people in establishing such economic zones.
Exports to the EU record high

Bangladesh's exports to the EU rose to a record high in 2011, with earnings of 8.5 billion euros or about $11 billion. The EU Ambassador in Dhaka Mr. William Hanna mentioned this on 16 April 2012 in a meeting with representatives of Bangladesh businesses.

The number far exceeded the previous record in 2010, when Bangladesh exports to the EU were 5.5 billion euros, of which about 87 percent was readymade garments. The huge increase in exports was possible thanks to the relaxed rules of origin for Bangladesh since January 2011. The Bangladesh business representatives conveyed their apprehension that the EU-India Free Trade Agreement, which is under negotiation, could lead to the erosion of Bangladesh's preferential edge in the EU. The envoy suggested diversification, improvement in productivity through skills development, and maintenance of quality to remain competitive in the EU market.

DIGITAL BANGLADESH

Digital signature introduced

Bangladesh entered the world of 'digital signature' which certifies information, the provider's identity and authenticity of the document. The information and communication ministry unfolded the new system at the Bangladesh Computer Council on 18 April 2012. ICT ministry officials elaborate that a digital signature is a mathematical scheme to demonstrate the authenticity of a digital message or document which is equivalent to traditional handwritten signatures in many respects and more difficult to forge than the former. This would help implement secure online transactions, online stock trading, different types of online company registrations, online procurement, and easy income tax payments. From now on inter-ministerial information flow would be faster paving the way of e-commerce.
Australian development workers in Bangladesh

The Australian Volunteers for International Development will work for a year in Bangladesh to support development organisations in areas of water, sanitation, health and climate change. Ten young Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) arrived in Dhaka on April 20 to support development organisations for one year. The organisations include Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed, World Vision Bangladesh, Solidarities International, International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh and Food and Agriculture Organization, situated in Dhaka and Chittagong. Currently 40 such volunteers are working in Bangladesh. Acting High Commissioner of Australia in Bangladesh welcomed the volunteers at the High Commission and said that the volunteers will be able to build long lasting relations between the two friendly countries.

Bumper mango harvests expected this year

Growers and agriculture officials expect bumper production of mango in the district this season as favourable weather conditions have helped about 70 percent flowering of the trees and smooth growth of the delicious summer fruit. This season around two lakh tonnes of mango production is expected in Chapainawabganj known as the 'mango capital' of Bangladesh. In there, last year's yield was around 1.85 lakh tonnes.

Mango growers, who started taking good care of the fruit trees from December last year, are now spraying pesticides to protect the fruits. According to traditional yielding nature, mango trees flower and bear fruits in abundance in alternative years and this year can be considered an 'on year' in
Chapainawabganj has a long tradition of producing around 150 varieties of high quality tasty mangoes including fazli, langra, gopalbhogh, khirshapat, khirshabogh, lakhna, bombai, mohonbhogh and ashwina. Mango cultivation is a profitable venture in Chapainawabganj as well as in other Northern districts. A large number of people are employed for nursing the trees, harvesting the fruit and packing and transporting to different areas of the country during the mango season every year.

**NASA to research Bangladesh meteorology**

National Aeronautics and Space Administration, (NASA), USA would conduct an airborne scientific research on weather, climate and air quality of Bangladesh. The output of the study would be useful for weather forecast and agricultural research in Bangladesh, according.

Hal Maring, chief scientist of Earth science division at Nasa, called on the Hon. Environment and Forest Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud on April 12, 2012 and conveyed this message. Around 250 scientists will take part in the study at the critical time of year, when strong weather systems and prolific regional air pollution pump chemicals and particles stay high into the atmosphere. NASA views the meteorology of Bangladesh rest of South East Asia as “an excellent natural laboratory to understand how pollution, weather and climate interact”. The Hon. Minister Dr. Mahmud thanked the NASA authorities for choosing Bangladesh for their research, the outcome of which would help Bangladesh derive important scientific facts.

**EMBASSY NEWS**

April 4–16

40 years of Bangladesh-US diplomatic relations

April 4, 2012 marked the 40th anniversary of Bangladesh’s diplomatic relations with the USA. To celebrate the occasion, the Embassy of Bangladesh in Washington DC organized a series of cultural events showcasing Bangladesh. The events included symposium, film screening, musical drama based on the
life and works of Shah Abdul Karim, musical evening with sitarist Alif Laila.

Ambassador Akramul Qader and Mrs. Rifat Sultana Akram hosted a reception on 4 April 2012 at the University Club, Washington DC which was attended by senior US officials, business representatives, members of the diplomatic corps. On 5 April 2012 a symposium was organized at the Embassy on Bangladesh-US economic ties. US officials, academics and businessmen attended the day-long seminar.

A Bangladeshi American sitarist Ms. Alif Laila enthralled classical music lovers on April 7, 2012 at the Bangabandhu Auditorium of the Embassy. Ms. Laila’s latest CD ‘I’m a River’ was released on this occasion. A Bangla film entitled Shyamol Chhaya based on a popular novel by Humayun Ahmed was screened at a Theater in Virginia. A group performance ‘Mohajoner Nao’ based on the life and works of late Shah Abdul Karim took place on 15 April 2012.

The series of events were a true opportunity to celebrate the leaders, entrepreneurs, institutions, and cultural exponents who immensely contributed over the last four decades for deepening ties between the two democratic nations. Both US nationals and members of the Bangladesh diaspora took interest in the events and were in attendance.

14 April
Pahela Boishakh celebrated

The event also coincided with the Embassy’s series of programs to celebrate the 40 years of Bangladesh-US diplomatic relations. Hon’ble Minister for Food and Disaster Management Dr. Muhammad Abdur Razzaque M.P., who was on a visit to USA attended the program. The Embassy officials, their family members and leading cultural activists of Bangladesh based in the greater Washington DC area took part in the cultural evening.

The cultural programme included chorus performance of the traditional year beginner eso hey boishakh eso eso, country and patriotic songs by members of the Bangladesh Embassy family and expatriate Bangladesh community. Bangladesh Ambassador to the USA and State Minister Mr. Akramul Qader and Mrs. Rifat Sultana Akram exchanged new year’s greetings with the guests. In his speech, Ambassador Qader expressed his hope that the new year would renew hope and prosperity in the lives of all Bangladeshi citizens living in the
USA and in other foreign countries and to their near and dear ones in Bangladesh. Ambassador Qader expressed his hope that this occasion would expose the new generation of Bangladeshis to the nation’s rich cultural heritage.

This year the Embassy recognized the Diaspora socio-cultural organizations who made important contributions to the cause of spreading Bangali culture particularly among the new generation of the Bangladeshis of the Diaspora. These organizations were: Ektara (for promoting folk culture), Drishtipat DC (for promoting Bangladesh’s history especially the war of independence to the new generation in the USA), Friends and Family (for the promotion of Bangladeshi festivals) and BCCDI-Bangla School (for teaching Bangla Language to the younger generation). A large number of Bangladeshi nationals and members of Bangladesh Diaspora, businessmen, journalists and foreign nationals were present on the occasion. The guests were served with traditional Bangladeshi foods.

30 April 2012
Young entrepreneurs met with Ambassador Akramul Qader

A group of young entrepreneurs from Bangladesh who had been participating in an exchange program of US State Department and University of Oklahoma met with Ambassador Akramul Qader on 30 April 2012.

Ambassador Qader briefed the students on business and investment prospects in Bangladesh and the initiatives taken by the present government to foster economic growth. He pointed out that Bangladesh has opted for a private sector led growth strategy the success of which hinges on the imagination and ingenuity of both local and foreign entrepreneurs. Professor Joe Foote, Dean and Edward L. Gaylord Chair of the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication thanked the ambassador for the briefing which would help the business representatives in serving different companies in Bangladesh. The event was organized as part of the Embassy’s outreach programme.
PHOTO GALLERY

Celebrating 40 years of Bangladesh-US diplomatic relations: Reception at the University Club of W. DC
Celebrating 40 years of Bangladesh-US diplomatic relations: Reception (above) & Embassy symposium (below)
Celebrating 40 years of Bangladesh-US diplomatic relations: Embassy Symposium (above)

Musical evening with Sitarist Alif Laila (Below)

Celebrating 40 years of Bangladesh-US diplomatic relations: Musical drama “Mohajoner Nao” (Below)
Celebrating 40 years of Bangladesh-US diplomatic relations: Musical drama ‘Mohajoner Nao’ (above)

Solo Painting Exhibition of Painter Rezaul Karim (Below)
Painting Exhibition of Rezaul Karim (above) & Celebrating Pahela Boishakh (below)
Young Entrepreneurs visit Embassy under State Department-Oklahoma University Exchange Programme (below)

News source:

**Different daily and weekly newspapers published from Bangladesh**