

VIBRANT BANGLADESH

Monthly Web Journal
January 2013

[Volume 6 Issue 1]



Embassy of Bangladesh
Washington D.C.

HIGHLIGHTS

POLITICAL AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visits Russia

US Congress Team visits Bangladesh

ICT-B delivers its maiden judgment

Bangladesh and India sign Extradition Treaty

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Govt. nationalizes 26113 primary schools

NHRC drafting new law to end discrimination

BRAC ranked top NGO in the World

UN lauds Bangladesh as a model for MDGs

BUSINESS, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

World Bank funds rise

Gas Production increased considerably

'Olymp' increases RMG purchase from Bangladesh

Remittance sets new benchmark

DIGITAL BANGLADESH

73% rural household use mobile phones

Bangladesh Bank launches online monitoring

Digital database for manpower export

International remittance through bKash

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Funds for Climate Change Battle

Climate-smart rice seeds for Bangladeshi farmers

ART & CULTURE

6th Intl Children's Film Festival held in Dhaka

Book on Bengal's economic history published

EMBASSY NEWS

Ambassador meets Congressmen to discuss GSP

Ambassador attends 57th US Presidential inauguration

POLITICAL AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Prime Minister visits Russia

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid a three-day official visit to the Russian Federation from 14 to 16 January 2013 at the invitation of Russian leadership. The visit marked the second highest level visit from Dhaka to Moscow after 40 years since Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman paid the first official visit in 1972.

During the visit, among others, the Prime Minister held talks with the Russian Federation delegation, led by President Vladimir Putin, and discussed the entire gamut of bilateral relations and also a number of possible sectoral engagements leading into signing of deals to set up a 2000 MW nuclear power plant and in areas of defence, education and culture.



During the official talks at Kremlin, the two leaders signed three agreements-- i. for state export credit for financing the preparatory works of Rooppur nuclear power plant, ii. for establishment of a nuclear energy information

centre in Dhaka, and iii. for the state export credit for financing defence purchase. Besides, six memoranda of understanding in different areas were also signed.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressed the faculty members and students of Moscow State University. The theme of the speech was “Contemporary Bangladesh-perspectives for collaboration with Russia”.

The Prime Minister also met the Director General of Russian State Atomic Energy Corporation (ROSATOM) to discuss on the establishment of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, work of which will commence this year.

US Congress Team visits Bangladesh

A five-member delegation from US Congress led by Jack Kingston (R-GA) paid a visit to Dhaka on 26 January 2013. They discussed contemporary issues including the GSP with top government officials and garment leaders.

The delegation called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and attended a luncheon meeting hosted by Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni at State Guesthouse *Padma* when entire range of bilateral issues came up for discussion including GSP and DFQF access of Bangladesh's RMG products into US market. The delegation visited

Sepal Garments, an export-oriented apparel factory in the Tejgaon industrial area prior to their departure from Dhaka.

After the hour-long visit, Shafiul Islam Mohiuddin, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) mentioned that, the Congress team was quite satisfied with, among others, the safety standards maintained by the factory. He said, the delegation was particularly interested to know about fire safety measures in the RMG industry. They were informed that, among 5000 garments factories, majority are compliant and passed auditory inspections. However, BGMEA has established a task force to find out factories with bad working conditions and arrange trainings for those. BGMEA is hopeful of their support for Bangladesh in the US Congress on the question of GSP.

Meanwhile, ahead of the visit of the US Congressmen, Bangladesh Ambassador to USA Akramul Qader met with them separately at the Capitol Hill. He handed them some documents on the importance of US GSP for Bangladesh's flourishing trade with the USA and the harsh impact of any restrictions to be imposed on the GSP facility extended to Bangladesh.

ICT-B delivers its maiden judgment

International Crimes Tribunal - Bangladesh, (ICT-B), constituted in 2010 to try the individuals accused of war crimes and crimes

against humanity committed during the 9-month long liberation war in 1971, has delivered its maiden judgment on 21 January 2013. The International Crimes Tribunal, in its first-ever judgment in the case of "The Chief Prosecutor vs. Abul Kalam Azad Bacchu (absconding)", found the accused 'guilty of the offences of Crimes against Humanity and Genocide' and sentenced him to death under section 20(2) of the International Crimes Tribunal Act of 1973.

The judgment has not only ensured long-due justice to the martyrs of the liberation war and the victims of the atrocities committed by the invading force and their collaborators, but also has proved to be a way forward from the culture of impunity. The trial has been appreciated by the international community as fair and impartial.

After the judgment, positive reactions were received from friendly countries like, US, UK, Germany and France. In a press release issued on 22 January, the US Department of State mentioned that, 'The United States supports bringing to justice those who commit such crimes.' The British Foreign Minister, in a statement, said, 'The British Government supports the efforts of Bangladesh to bring to justice those responsible for committing atrocities during the 1971 War'. The German and French Ambassadors in Dhaka commented that, every country must find its own way to deal with the past.

Bangladesh and India sign Extradition Treaty

Bangladesh and India signed two landmark treaties including an extradition treaty during the 4th Ministerial level meeting at Dhaka held from 28 to 29 January 2013. The Home Ministers of the two countries signed the treaty.

Later, in a joint statement it was stated that, "The extradition treaty will help to increase cooperation among law enforcing agencies of the two countries and to curb criminal activities. The RTA (Revised Travel Arrangements) will ease the visa regime and will promote people to people exchanges," read the joint statement."



After signing the treaty, Bangladesh Home Minister Mr. Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir asked his counterpart for immediate tracking, arrest and handover of killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman reportedly living in India.

The other agreement on liberalized visa regime between the two countries, when put in force, will help tourists from the neighbouring countries obtain visas for up to one year. This will also allow them to travel more than once. The visa will permit up to three persons to accompany a patient.

Bangladesh Police Officers get US Peace Award

357 members of Bangladesh Police was awarded with UN Peace Award as recognition of their professional excellence, high morale and important contribution to peacekeeping activities in Côte d'Ivoire.

The local Police Commissioner Gen Murry Buri adorned the police personnel with the "UN Medal" and handed over certificates at Bangladesh Formed Police Unit (BANFPU)-1 grounds in the West African country's town of Booyaka on Friday.

General Buri lauded the devotion, sincerity and professional attitude of Bangladesh Police in peace missions and hoped that they would sustain this trend in the future.

New Foreign Secretary in Charge

Md. Shahidul Haque, a career Foreign Service Officer, has been appointed as Secretary in charge of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs replacing Mohamed Mijarul Quayes, who is now serving as the Bangladesh High Commissioner in London.

Shahidul Haque, from 1986 batch of BCS cadre, became the 25th Foreign Secretary. Mr. Shahidul Haque has also worked over a decade for the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) from 2001 till last year.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Government nationalizes 26193 primary schools

The Government has nationalized 26,193 non-government primary schools of the country. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced it on 10 January 2013 at the National Parade Square.

She also announced that country's primary education would be fully nationalized by January 1, 2014. All non-government, registered and non-registered primary schools would be nationalized in three phases; in the first phase, all the MPO-listed schools would be nationalized from January 1 this year and all the non-MPO (Monthly Payment Order) registered and non-registered schools would be funded by the government from July 1.

With the nationalization of the schools, the jobs of 1.04 lakh teachers and employees of the 26,193 institutions have also been nationalized.

Mentionable, the student enrolment rate has been increased to 98.7 percent in last year from 87.2 percent in 2005.

Government is taking all measures to implement the National Education Policy adopted in 2010. For example, to check dropout, the government has taken various initiatives including strengthening the monitoring activities, introduction of midday meal, giving stipends to poor students and free textbooks to all. Besides,

government has introduced pre-primary sections in about 57,000 schools and target has been set to introduce it in all the schools by the end of this year.

Under the new education policy, the government is minimizing the ratio of teachers and students to raise the quality of classroom education and accordingly has recruited 82,725 headmasters, assistant teachers and staff and officers in government primary schools.

NHRC drafting new law to end discrimination

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has taken an initiative to formulate a law to end discrimination against the marginalized communities, says its Chairman, Dr Mizanur Rahman.

The Commission, jointly with Law Commission, has already started its work and will ask the Government to pass the Law in Parliament.

The Chairman mentioned that, in the law, every kind of discriminations should be defined as criminal offence and the state will address the discrimination. He urged the underprivileged like *Dalits*, people with disabilities, *Adivasis* to file complaints with the NHRC if there is any incident of discrimination.

BRAC ranked top NGO in the World

Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) has been ranked as the top non-governmental organization in The Global Journal's list of 100 best NGOs in the world this year. The Switzerland-based magazine considered approximately 450 NGOs that were evaluated on three criteria -- impact, innovation and sustainability. BRAC, the only NGO from Asia to have made it to top, rising from its previous rank of fourth place last year.

In its special edition, the journal said, "A member of the era-defining 1970s wave of Bangladeshi micro-credit and micro-finance pioneers alongside the Grameen Bank and ASA, BRAC has since gone on to outpace its old counterparts and assume an unparalleled position in the crowded field of international development."

BRAC currently operates in 11 countries across Asia, Africa and the Caribbean touching the lives of estimated 126 million people.

Cabinet okays Law to control Baby Foods

The cabinet approved a draft law increasing the penalty for its violation in an effort to control and regulate production, marketing and publicity of baby foods substitute to breastfeeding. The law titled, "Breastfeeding Substitute Baby Food (Marketing Control) Act, 2013", is an effort to

increase awareness about breastfeeding among people.

Under this law, publicity or advertisement of substitute baby foods will not be allowed so that it never seems that substitute foods are better than breastfeeding and permission must be taken beforehand to publicize baby foods. The proposed law has increased the fine to Tk 5 lakh from existing Tk 5,000 and the jail term to a maximum of three years from two years for any violation.

UN lauds Bangladesh as a model for MDGs

Neal Walker, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh praised the country for its strong performance in achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and said that the world looks to Bangladesh for its inputs beyond 2015.

Quoting UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, he said, Bangladesh has a critical voice in the run-up to the decision making process. The reason is, Bangladesh is the largest LDC in the world, with a long history of intellectual achievement and engagement in global debate, and a strong, explicit political will to make a meaningful, strategic contribution to the global debate.

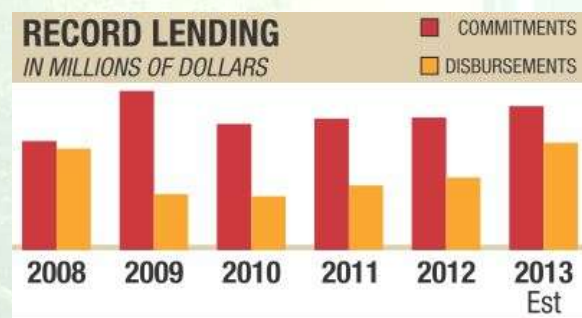
He was speaking in a high-level meeting convened to discuss Bangladesh's position paper on post-2015 arrangement, which is due by March 2012.

BUSINESS, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

World Bank funds rise in Bangladesh

World Bank's lending to Bangladesh has risen over the last 4 years and substantial improvements have been seen in disbursements of funds in different WB-funded projects. A review made jointly by the Government of Bangladesh and World Bank revealed such information.

According to estimate, the amount of fund release may rise about 60 percent to \$800 million in fiscal 2012-13, compared to the previous year. The WB disbursed \$500 million in fiscal 2011-12, a rise of 11.11 percent from the previous year. Disbursements are at record levels in the first half of fiscal 2013.



The review said the Bank and the Bangladesh government found progress from the baseline for 76 percent of programme indicators, with another 14 percent showing no change and 7 percent showing deterioration.

This is an improvement over the previous year, with a notable upswing in data availability for indicators from only 56 percent to an impressive 97 percent, it said.

“It gives me immense pleasure that the government and the World Bank were able to deliver results in most of the areas in our strategy,” said Ellen Goldstein, WB's country director for Bangladesh.

Gas production increased considerably

Natural gas production in Bangladesh has increased considerably over the last 4 years, thanks to Bangladesh's national Oil Company, BAPEX and US Company Chevron.

In 2009, the country's gas supplies hovered around 1850-1900 million cubic feet per day (mmcf), which was a few hundred mmcf short of the demand. Over the next four years, the supplies increased up to 2,250 mmcf due to increased production by the national gas company, BAPEX and Chevron. Of this increase, Chevron alone provided 250 mmcf. Chevron is now investing half a billion dollars to increase Bibiyana gas field's production by 300 mmcf by early next year to address the country's gas crisis.

The Bibiyana gas field is currently producing over 820 mmcf gas and 3,610 barrels of

condensate (a liquid petroleum by-product) a day. According to study report conducted by DeGolyer & MacNaughton in 2009 using data from 12 wells and a 3D seismic survey, Bibiyana's proven gas reserve is scaled up to 4.42 tcf with a high possibility of hitting up to 5.76 tcf gas in the field.

Based on these new figures, Chevron was allowed to increase production. From Bibiyana, Moulavibazar and Jalalabad fields, Chevron is currently producing 1150 mmcf/d, roughly half the country's daily gas consumption.

'Olymp' Increases RMG purchase from Bangladesh

Olymp, a high-end garment wholesaler in Germany, is going to increase its purchase from Bangladesh. Mark Benzer, the owner of the Company, during his recent visit to Bangladesh announced this.

Currently, Olymp purchases 1.3 million pieces of men's shirts a year from Bangladesh, including some other knitwear products for men, from Viyellatex Group. The company plans to increase the number to two million pieces soon, as they consider Bangladesh as a capable source for supplying the items at competitive prices.

Mr. Benzer mentioned that, Bangladesh's garment sector will not be affected by the proposed withdrawal of the GSP facility by the US. He also added, the adoption of resolution by the European parliamentarians on the recent fire

at Tazreen Fashions in Bangladesh will also not affect country's RMG business in Europe because the country has improved a lot in this business over the years.

Remittance sets new benchmark

Remittance has reached US\$14.17 billion setting another benchmark in 2012. Thanks to increase in manpower export, inward remittances grew 16.43 percent in 2012 from the previous year whereas migrant workers remitted \$1.28 billion back home in December only - a 16.60 percent rise from the previous month.



Last fiscal year, manpower export increased 57 percent and the total number of workers went abroad was 691,402, the second highest in Bangladesh's history, according to Bangladesh Bank statistics. In 2007-08, around 981,102 workers went abroad for jobs.

Besides, continuous efforts from Bangladesh Bank to regularize and ensure safe and swift money transfer from abroad contributed in the rise.

Manpower Exports in Malaysia & Brunei

Malaysia has recently offered 10,000 jobs for Bangladeshi males in its plantation sector lifting a 4 year ban. This time, Government has decided to send the workers under State arrangements, instead of giving the task to private recruiting agencies. With this end in view, Government is preparing a database of 35,000 job seekers 1 among whom 11,500 will be selected by lottery in the first phase for recruitment by Malaysia.

Brunei, on the other hand, has emerged as the second largest destination for Bangladeshi workers in South & South-East Asia after Singapore by recruiting 5,038 workers in 2012.

Garments Accessories show held in Dhaka

Three international trade fairs held in Dhaka in January 2013 to showcase garment accessories and packaging products, machinery, and yarn and fabrics.

The 4th International Garment Accessories and Packaging Exposition (Gapexpo), held at the

Bangabandhu International Conference Centre at Agargaon, Dhaka from 13 January displayed garment accessories, packaging and machineries

to the national and international garment makers. The fair had 560 booths in total.

The other two fairs were Garmentech, that displayed garment and allied machinery, and Yarn and Fabrics Showcasing Fair.

About 1,200 companies in Bangladesh produce export-oriented accessories such as poly bags, hangers, buttons, button tags, labels, zippers, backboards, neck boards, sewing threads, tissues and embroideries meeting around 95 percent of the demand for accessories and packaging of the garment industries. From this sector, Bangladesh earned foreign currency worth \$3.75 billion in fiscal 2011-12.

Companies from China, India, South Korea, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, the US and the European Union also took part in the fairs.

UN Puts Bangladesh at the Top

In a recent report on the economic conditions in South Asia, United Nations has put Bangladesh at the top along with Sri Lanka.

The report says, despite all its economy-related woes, Bangladesh has made a good showing with a GDP growth of 6.2 per cent in 2012.

DIGITAL BANGLADESH

73% rural household use mobile phones

According to a recent survey conducted by International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), some 73% of Bangladesh's rural households use mobile phones.

IFPRI conducted the survey on 65,000 households in rural areas of all seven divisions from October 2011 to March 2012, and queried, among other issues, on use of mobile phones by these household.

The results of the survey matched with the subscription database of six operators of the country, Grameenphone, Bangla-link, Robi, Airtel, Citycell and Teletalk, according to which, nearly 100 million of the country's 150 million population subscribe to them. The mobile technology was introduced in Bangladesh more than two decades ago.

IFPRI survey shows that 81.6 percent of households in rural areas of Chittagong have functioning mobile phones, followed by Khulna at 77.2 percent and Rajshahi at 74.1 percent. Sylhet, Barisal and Dhaka have above 70 percent of rural families using mobile phones, while Rangpur has 64.3 percent, the lowest concentration.

Bangladesh bank launches online monitoring

Bangladesh Bank has introduced online monitoring of banks' activities relating to purchases of inland and foreign documentary bills for letters of credit and flow of inward and outward remittances to ensure transparency in the foreign exchange transaction. For this, the Bank has set up three software solutions, i) online import management system, ii) online TM form management system, and iii) online C-form and wage earners' remittance reporting system.

Now, the Central Bank gets reports on the purchases of the IDB and the FDB through the online import management system software on daily basis, which earlier it used to receive from the banks only on monthly basis.

The system will now help the banking sector regulator handle any large-scale embezzlement more efficiently. If any bank gave excess bills of acceptance to other bank, the central bank would be informed promptly because of the new application which has been put in place.

Earlier, the Central Bank had been monitoring banks' export data through a software solution for more than one year. However, now on, the BB will be able to monitor all types of the local and the cross border foreign exchange

transactions through the new software application. It would also help decrease money laundering in the coming days due to the stricter online monitoring.

International Remittance through bKash

Non-resident Bangladeshis can send international remittance to the country through their mobile phones, using bKash and the bKash account holders in Bangladesh can, thus, receive the remittance directly on their mobile phones.

bKash, a subsidiary of BRAC Bank has initiated this system. At the beginning, only the expatriates in UAE and UK could send international remittance through bKash from BRAC Bank designated exchange houses. Remitters from other countries will also be able to avail of this facility soon.

To send money from overseas, the sender just needs to select bKash as the mode of termination; the receiver will receive the fund directly in the bKash account on his/her mobile phone. Standard bKash services and charges will be applicable in Bangladesh.

bKash aims to provide fast and convenient financial services to its customers through

mobile devices, with the ultimate goal of widening the net of financial inclusion. bKash is currently available on Robi, Grameenphone, and Banglalink networks.

Digital database for manpower export

In an effort to handle manpower export under state arrangement, the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment, introduced digital database for interested job-seekers abroad.

The Ministry, in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Office has established total 4,516 Union Information Service Centers (UISCs) all over the country. Bangladeshi nationals interested for jobs abroad are to registrar online through these service centers. Access to Information (A2I) Programme of PMO has been assigned to monitor the online registration process.

The online registration has been started for 10,000 job offers from Malaysia and the database once established will help select the candidates through lottery. The first phase of registration began on 13 January from Dhaka and Barisal Division and gradually covered all divisions of the country.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Funds from donors for Climate Change battle

Bangladesh will receive funds worth over \$100 million for climate change battle from several donors including ADB, IFAD and German Development Cooperation.

\$40 million in loans from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for the purpose of improving road and market connectivity and enhancing climate change adaptation capacity and \$10 million will be offered as grant in support of the Coastal Climate Resilient Infrastructure Project which aims to improve the livelihood in the 12 rural coastal districts of Bangladesh vulnerable to climate variability and change. The project is expected to raise household incomes of people in the rural climate change-prone districts by 20 percent within 2021, while benefiting over 800,000 people directly.

The assistance will contribute to boosting year-round connectivity between agricultural production areas and markets and to other parts of the country by enhancing infrastructure to climate change standards, upgrade growth centers and large markets, connecting those to paved roads and women's market sections in existing community markets, build boat landing platforms to climate change standards and construct and improve cyclone shelters.

IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development), on the other hand, is providing \$59 million in loans and \$1 million in grant, while German Development Cooperation is providing \$8.8 million in loans through *KfW*.

Government of Bangladesh is providing \$31.2 million for the project which is going to be implemented by the Local Government Engineering Department.

Climate-smart rice seeds for Bangladeshi farmers

The Government is going to introduce four new stress-tolerant rice seeds- two *saline-tolerant* and two *submergence-tolerant* to scale up production by fighting the effects of climate change.

The seeds will enter the existing basket of 11 climate-smart rice seeds developed in the last six years, most of which are having capacity to fight salinity, drought and submerged conditions. Of the four stress-tolerant seeds, two saline-resistant high-yielding varieties came from Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) and other two from Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture (BINA).

The saline-resilient seeds, expected to be named *BRRI Dhan 61* and *62*, have up to 6.5 tonnes of yield potential per hectare at normal condition. It will help farmers grow rice during the *boro*

season in the south, where 10 lakh hectares of farmland remain unused during the dry season due to salinity intrusion.

The other two, expected to be named *Bina Dhan-11* and *Bina Dhan-12*, will yield 4.5 tonnes to 5.5 tonnes per hectare. These rice seeds will mature early, within 115-125 days of harvesting, while the normal rate is 140-160 days and will have the potential to withstand 20-25 days in submerged condition. These seeds will help farmers from losses incurred by floods during *Aman* season.

All these newly developed rice seeds have been placed at the technical committee of the National Seed Board for approval.

Government approves Bio-pesticide marketing

In an initiative to market and distribute environment-friendly pest control to farmers for growing safe vegetables and fruits, the government has started certifying bio-pesticides. The Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) has nodded green light to two types of pheromones and a bio-pesticide among applications from nine types of biological control agents.

Local tea-giant Ispahani Ltd received clearance for selling two types of pheromones, which help control pest in cucurbit, mango and guava. Russel IPM, a UK-based bio-pesticide maker, is the company, was approved for marketing a bio-

pesticide that curbs insects of brinjal, chili, bean and tomato.

Bio-pesticides came as an alternative to chemical pesticides. The excessive use of chemical pesticides over a long period has deepened health-hazard worries.

The use of chemical pesticides trebled to 45,000 tonnes/kilolitres since 2000, spurred by credit-based sales by firms and farmers' urge to protect their crops from pest attacks. The bulk of chemical pesticides are used on rice, but the intensity of use is higher in vegetables, such as eggplants.

Floating vegetable gardens in Lalmanirhat

Around 250 marginal farmers at 20 villages of the Lalmanirhat district of the country, are now cultivating vegetables on floating beds of *Teesta* and *Dharla* basin. The project was first initiated by 'Own Village Advancement (OVA)', a local NGO, with 100 marginal farmers at seven villages of the district in 2011.



Such vegetables are cultivated on floating beds prepared of water hyacinth and tightened with bamboo frames. The farmers are producing different vegetables including aubergine, coriander, okra, green chili, tomato, spinach, bottle gourd, mint, mustard and *lal shak*, without any insecticides.

Vegetable cultivation on a 100-square-foot floating garden costs only Tk 350 to 400, however, regular care is needed for getting expected output from there.

'Pani Purification', by Bangladesh origin American Girl

Sabera Talukder, a Bangladesh-origin American Girl, has invented new water purification technology, named *pani-purification*.

With the help of ICDDRB and Incepta Pharmaceuticals of Bangladesh, Sabera analyzed samples from 28 different locations near Dhaka to find out the organic and inorganic impurities in those water and based on detailed data she conducted research for eighteen months at the Silicon Valley, California to design a water filter.

While designing the filter, Sabera had simple but utilitarian goals: the filter should be easy to build, use, and maintain; critical components should cost less than US \$25; and any power requirement must be met using solar power.

Sabera's invention won awards in several international science competitions including the Google Science Fair 2012. Among 7,000 projects, Google nominated Sabera's 'Pani Purification' project as one of the top 15 projects. (<http://goo.gl/ftGtd>).



(Sabera, 3rd from left, at her project area in Bangladesh)

Sabera's water purification system has three stages. First, sand is used to remove the larger impurities, both organic and inorganic. Second, Ultraviolet-C light kills bacteria. Finally, a charcoal filter removes smaller inorganic impurities. The filter can be run on solar power or regular electricity.

Sabera has recently installed two prototype filters at locations of Sajida Foundation, a local NGO, which is cooperating with her. However, she aims to continue the research so that the purification can eliminate cause of all five waterborne diseases.

ART & CULTURE

6th International Children's Film Fest held in Dhaka

The 6th International Film Festival featuring over 200 films from 42 countries was held in Dhaka from 19 to 25 January at the Central Public Library. The nationwide fest, organized by the Children's Film Society of Bangladesh, in association with UNICEF was held in 22 venues in seven divisional cities.



With the slogan “Future in Frames”, the festival was participated by 125 child delegates, four foreign delegates including filmmakers, film critics and producers. The participating countries included Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brazil, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Pakistan, Russia, Singapore and USA.

After the inauguration, four films -- “Water for Life”, “The Window”, “Ambitious” and “Tony Ten” - were screened. Five child film-makers were awarded and a girl film-maker was given special accolade.

Apart from film screening, the festival included a workshop on the topic, "Telling the Story" and a seminar.

Book published on Bengal's economic history

Bangladesh History Organization organized the publication ceremony of a book on the economic history of Bengal at the Department of History of Dhaka University on 07 January 2013. The book titled, "An Economic History of Bengal (1757-1947)", has been written by prominent economic historian Prof M Mufakharul Islam and published by Adorn Publication.

The book summarises the main features of the economy of the Bengal province during the period starting from the battle of Palashi and covered the beginning of the economic drain, de-industrialization, development of some modern industries, trends in agricultural production, land transfer, construction of the railway network, and the 1943 famine, among others.

Wasfia Conquers Antarctica

Bangladeshi mountaineer Wasfia Nazreen conquered Mount Vinson, the highest point of Antarctica, on 05 January as part of her ongoing quest to climb the seven highest mountains of the world's seven continents.

Wasfia, earlier climbed Mount Everest, the highest peak of the world.

EMBASSY NEWS

Bangladesh Ambassador met US Policymakers to discuss GSP

Ambassador Akramul Qader held series of meetings with a number of US Congressmen, Deputy US Trade Representative and Assistant Secretary of State to brief them on the ongoing debate on the US-GSP issue.

The Congressmen included, Mr. Sander M Levin (04 Jan), Ms. Betty Mc Collum and Mr. Adam Schiff (15 Jan), Mr. Jim Moran and Mr. Scott Tipton (22 Jan) and Ed Whitefield, Jack Kingston (23 Jan). Ambassador Qader also met with Ambassador Marantis, Deputy USTR on 10 January and Assistant Secretary of State Ambassador Robert O Blake on 23 January.

During the meetings, the Ambassador briefed them how the withdrawal of GSP would adversely affect Bangladesh's overall socio-economic situation by creating serious dislocation in garments business costing the jobs of millions of poor women and sought their support for retention of GSP rights for Bangladesh. Ambassador highlighted on the actions Bangladesh Government has already taken to ensure labour rights and safety in factories.

Embassy also engaged the Diaspora to put up with their submissions to the UN Trade Representative supporting Bangladesh's cause. The efforts also resulted into a visit by delegation from US Congress to Bangladesh during 26-27 January 2013.

Ambassador attends Presidential Inauguration

Ambassador Akramul Qader attended the 57th *Presidential Inauguration* of the United States of America on 21 January 2013 at the US Capitol Building to witness the swearing-in of President Obama as the 44th President of the USA.

Ambassador Qader also attended *Presidential Inauguration Continental Breakfast* at the US Department of State, *Diplomatic Luncheon* hosted by Ambassador Capricia Penavic Mashall and the National Democratic Institute at the Blair House and the Inaugural parade in front of the Blair House and the Inaugural Ball and Reception for the Diplomatic Corps at the Walter E Washington Convention Center.

PHOTO GALLERY



No. 1-4: Ambassador Akraumul Qader with US Congressmen

No. 5. Ambassador at Elizabeth City State University Khan Planetarium dedication ceremony

News sources:

Different daily and weekly newspapers published from Bangladesh