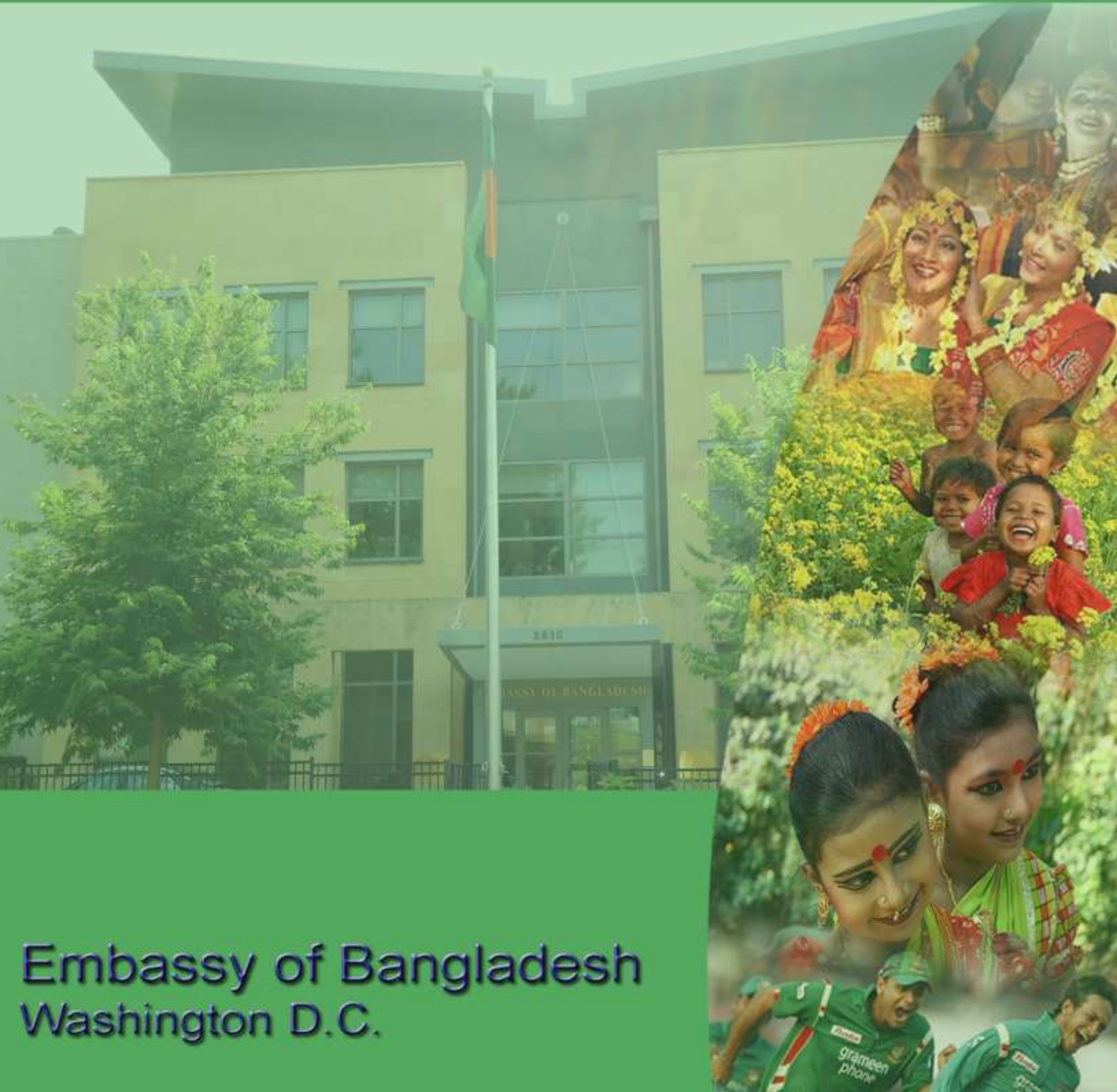


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POLITICAL AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Prime Minister addresses the 66th UN General Assembly



Hon. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressed the 66th UN General Assembly on September 24, 2011 in which she unveiled a six-point multi-dimensional peace model for championing democracy and people's empowerment, coinciding with the UNGA theme "Mediation in the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes". The six multipliers of her proposed model include eradication of

poverty and hunger, reduction of inequality, mitigation of deprivation, inclusion of excluded people, acceleration of human development and elimination of terrorism.

Many Heads of state and government were present in the august house as she delivered her speech in Bangla during the UNGA general debate at the United Nations headquarters. The Bangladesh Prime Minister reiterated her demand that Bangla be made one of the official languages at the UN.

Reposing her trust in peace as the basis for development the Bangladesh Prime Minister said "I believe peace prevails when justice prevails. Therefore, justice at home and abroad is important for ensuring a peaceful mediation and settlement of disputes

Prime Minister pointed out that commitments made in Istanbul last May in the areas of culture, energy, infrastructure, water and environment would also strengthen the economic stability of the LDCs, "Now, it is time for the development partners to implement the commitments made in Monterrey, Paris, and Brussels before the conclusion of the Doha Development Round. Support must continue to enable LDCs to fulfil their MDGs."

Seeking UN support for Bangladesh's annual flagship resolution "A Culture of Peace", launched in 2000 during her first stint as prime minister, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina noted that in the UN Peace

Building Commission, as NAM Coordinator, Bangladesh is always advocating peace building, development and preventive diplomacy in post-conflict societies. "Sadly, we remain woefully underrepresented at planning and strategy levels of the DPKO, an issue calling for a speedy resolution"-she said.

As a state party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the Bangladesh Prime Minister said, Bangladesh believes in the statute's provision of bringing perpetrators to justice. "It is the only way to heal the wrongs of the past, and bring national reconciliation." Reiterating the Bangladesh government's "zero tolerance policy against terrorism", she said the government's aim is

to break the nexus between terrorism, extremism and radicalisation, and eliminate them all from Bangladesh, a state party to all UN counterterrorism conventions.

Referring to the winning of the UN award for MDG-4 on reducing child mortality last year, Hasina said Bangladesh is on track on MDG-1 on poverty alleviation, MDG-2 on universal primary education, MDG-3 on gender equality and MDG-5 on reducing maternal mortality.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Foreign Secretary Mohamed Mijarul Quayes, Bangladesh Ambassador to the USA Akramul Qader, Bangladesh Permanent Representative to the UN in New York Dr. A K Abdul Momen were present on the occasion.

Bangladesh-India Head of Government level summit in Dhaka



Ten deals were signed between Bangladesh and India on September 6, 2011 during the visit of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Dhaka. Both nations expect that the accord would contribute to strengthening bilateral relations and boost mutual cooperation in diverse areas of the two neighbouring countries.

The signing ceremony took place at the International Conference Centre of Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Dhaka. Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh were present at the signing ceremony. The agreements include: Framework Agreement on Development Cooperation, Protocol on Land Boundary Agreement, Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Renewable Energy Cooperation, Addendum to the

MoU between Bangladesh and India to Facilitate Overland Transit Traffic between Bangladesh and Nepal, MoU on Conservation of Sundarbans Forest, MoU on Conservation of Royal Bengal Tiger, MoU on Cooperation in Fisheries, MoU between Dhaka University and Jawaharlal Nehru University, MoU between BTV and Durdarshan and MoU between BGMEA Fashion Institute and Indian National Institute of Fashion Technology.

After signing of the accord, the two prime ministers read out their brief speeches before the media. The Bangladesh Prime Minister stated that the 'Framework Agreement on Development Cooperation' is a visionary document that looks not only at the realities today, but also at the potentials of tomorrow. The Indian Prime Minister, in his speech, said that both the countries need continuous discussion for settling the sharing of waters of Teesta and Feni rivers. He gave assurance of addressing para-tariff and non-tariff barriers for Bangladesh's export to India. The Indian Prime Minister said India must develop the best possible relationship with Bangladesh.

Earlier, the two Prime Ministers held bilateral meetings. In response to Bangladesh's demand for a duty-free and quota-free market access for its 61 items to the Indian market, the Indian side agreed to provide duty-free access in 47 textile products (readymade garments). The main apparel items (RMG products) now to enter India duty-free are: men's or boys' trousers, women's or girls' blouses, girls' skirts and divided skirts, overalls and shorts for boys, girls and women, men's or boys' cotton nightshirts and pajamas, women's or girls' night dresses and cotton pajamas, swimwear for boys, girls and women, tracksuits, made-up clothing accessories and brassieres of all types of textile materials.

The Indian Prime Minister Mr. Manmohan Singh led a 137-member delegation to Dhaka from September 6-7, 2011 including the Indian foreign minister and four chief ministers of Assam, Mijoram, Meghalaya and Tripura states.

Hon. Foreign Minister at the BCIU business meeting in New York



Hon. Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni, MP addressed a group of US and Bangladesh business leaders in New York on September 19, 2011. The business session was jointly organized by the Embassy of Bangladesh in Washington DC and Business Council for International Understanding.

In her address, the Hon. Foreign Minister pointed out that *the priorities of the present government* are: maintenance of economic stability in the face of global economic

downturn, finding long term solutions to power and energy crisis, investment in education and health, alleviation of poverty, ensure good governance and simplify legal and procedural formalities to attract local and foreign investors. “Half way through our journey, I am happy to share with you that we are right on track to fulfill the commitment made to our people.”-she said.

The Hon. Foreign Minister noted that thanks to prudent macro-economic policies coupled with continued high growth of exports, increased flows of remittances, as well as development assistance from our friends including the US, Bangladesh has managed to keep fiscal and current account deficits at a manageable level. “It is heartening to see that our achievements did not go unnoticed in the international arena”-she said.

Referring to Bangladesh’s private sector led growth strategy, Dr. Dipu Moni said that the government is committed to economic reforms for an investment friendly policy regime with measures such

as: equal treatment for local and foreign investors, legal protection against nationalization and expropriation, guarantee for repatriation of capital and dividend, protection for intellectual property rights, corporate tax holiday, and concessionary duty on the import of machinery; export subsidies, and unrestricted exit policy. She urged upon the US investors to take advantage of the liberal investment regime in Bangladesh and invest in some of the less explored sectors such as pharmaceuticals, electronics, IT, light engineering, infrastructure building etc.

Bangladesh Ambassador to the USA Mr. Akramul Qader also spoke on the occasion and responded to the different queries from the US business representatives.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Taxpayers honoured

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) honoured 350 long-time and highest taxpayers in the country, marking Income Tax Day for the fourth year to create awareness of the importance of paying tax.

At a function at Officers' Club on 17 September 2011 the tax authority handed over crests and certificates to 90 taxpayers in Dhaka. Similar programmes were organised in other cities. Dividing in two categories – long time and highest taxpayers – the tax administrator picked five taxpayers from each of all six city corporations and five taxpayers from each

of 64 districts. Finance Minister AMA Muhith handed over the crests and certificates to these taxpayers out of the total 9 lakh taxpayers in the country. NBR chairman Nasiruddin Ahmed and other officials were present at the ceremony. "I feel honoured. It's a great feeling. Such recognition gives inspiration to continue paying tax. I will try to pay more tax to get

this recognition," said Mr. Asadul Islam who received the award for becoming the second highest taxpayer in Narayanganj district.

To ease tax payment and registration, the NBR also takes various steps including creating scope for the taxpayers to submit their returns online.

BUSINESS, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

46 apparel items to enter India duty-free

Bangladesh will receive a duty-free access for 46 apparel items duty-free access in the Indian market which is expected to reduce the existing trade imbalance. The decision came after a summit of the prime ministers of the two countries in Dhaka on September 6, 2011.

The items that got excluded are mostly fruits and vegetables. With this, India's negative list of products will come down to 434 from 480. Analysts and exporters predict that this would expand Bangladesh's export beyond the traditional western market. Through this move, a small start for tapping into a huge potential, it is

expected that Bangladesh would be a part of the production chain of a major economy. Bangladesh is a major apparel exporter in the world and apparel exports accounted for nearly \$18 billion or more than 80 percent of the country's total export of \$22.92 billion in fiscal 2010-11. Bangladesh enjoys duty-free access of its apparel products to the European Union, Canada, Australia and some Asian countries including Japan, Korea and China. It, however, could not reap the full benefit in some countries such as Canada, Japan and Australia. But exporters believe that things would be different with India, as it is a next-door neighbour with a population of 120 crore. India's annual retail apparel market is estimated at \$25 billion.

Share market: Extended time for investors to adjust

The Bangladesh Bank plans to increase the adjustment period of the single-party exposure limit, if it is necessary for the stockmarket, an executive director of Bangladesh Bank, said this on September 15, 2011. The assurance came at a meeting between the Securities and Exchange Commission and the SEC coordination committee that comprises representatives

from the finance ministry, BB, Dhaka and Chittagong bourses and the regulator.

The meeting was called to discuss ways to increase the flow of liquidity to the bruised stockmarket and rebuild investor confidence. It was the last of a series of meetings SEC held in the face of a continuous downtrend in the market. The central bank extended the adjustment period twice – first, from July to September, and then from September to December this year. And the central closely monitors the market situation to ensure that the interest of the share market and the investors are not hurt.

Zero-tariff market access for LDCs in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has decided to allow duty-free import of more than 240 items from developing and least developed countries. The move came as Bangladesh agreed to take out the products from its 'sensitive list' at a meeting of the Working Group on the Reduction of Sensitive Lists under SAFTA

in Kathmandu from September 22-23. The products cover 20 percent items of the sensitive list. At the meeting, Nepal submitted an offer list of 259 items, covering 20 percent of its sensitive list, while Sri Lanka offered the benefit to 197 items. Pakistan announced reduction of tariff on more than 40 percent items from its sensitive list by November 1. The meeting has also taken a move so that the reduced lists come to effect from January 1 next year.

Sleeping bags retain duty-free access to US

Bangladesh-made sleeping bags retain the duty-free export facility in the US market

till July 31 2013. The decision came after the US Senate passed a legislation renewing the expired Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) programme on September 22.

The US instituted the GSP in 1976 by the Trade Act of 1974. Congressional authorisation of the GSP programme expired in December 2010. As of mid-September this year, the Congress had not reauthorised the programme, shadowing the export prospect of the Bangladesh-made sleeping bags.

The GSP provides preferential duty-free entry for about 4,800 products from 129 designated beneficiary countries and

Wales Business delegation in Dhaka

With an aim to foster trade relations between the two countries a 24-member business delegation from Wales visited Bangladesh in the last week of September 2011. “We are here to encourage the Wales businesspeople to invest in Bangladesh. At the same time we are urging Bangladesh's business community to explore opportunities in Wales,” said Mr. Dilabor Hossain, Chairman of the Wales-Bangladesh Chamber and Commerce. at a press briefing on September 25, 2011. Christopher Connors, business development manager of Broadcrown Ltd, a power generator company, said: “We see

territories, including Bangladesh. Duties on the export of sleeping bags to the US vary between 10 percent and 40 percent, while the average duty for the item is 12 percent, according to exporters.

The sleeping bags manufacturing industry in Bangladesh is still new and only two or three companies (foreign) are making the item. Total export income from sleeping bags was \$5.3 million in 2010. Their exports were \$17,000 in 2008.

Bangladesh as a stable country with good credit rating. I think Bangladesh is a good place for doing business given the current global economic scenario.”

During their weeklong stay in Bangladesh, the delegates met with government high-ups and members of private sector including those from the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The Dhaka Chamber representatives noted that Wales offers huge opportunities for the Bangladeshi businesspeople in the areas such as ICT, engineering, technology, financial and medical services. Acting British High Commissioner Nick Low and Head of UK Trade and Industry in Dhaka Justin Davies were also present during the briefing.

Topsøe founder in Dhaka



Dr Haldor Topsøe, chairman and founder of the Topsøe Company in Denmark, came on a five-day official visit to Bangladesh . He laid the foundation stone of a new school of Utsho Bangladesh, a social welfare organisation, for the underprivileged children in Sreepur, Gazipur. Utsho received six bighas of land donated by Dr Topsøe to set up the school. Utsho runs three schools for underprivileged children - - in Badda and Rayerbazar, Dhaka, and in Sreepur, Gazipur.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Seven power plants approved

The government has approved setting up seven power plants partly with hard-term loans from abroad to lessen pressure on foreign exchange reserve and lower dependence on the private sector.

The approval came on 11 September 2011 at a meeting of the cabinet committee on economic affairs with Finance Minister Mr.

AMA Muhith in the chair. According to a Power Division proposal, the plants with a total capacity of 1,455 megawatt will cost Tk 10,230 crore, of which Tk 6,770 crore or \$900 million will come from overseas as supplier's credit. The projects will be implemented through inviting open tenders. The successful bidders will collect foreign credit from the international market.

DIGITAL BANGLADESH

Doel laptop in market soon

Bangladesh's first-ever manufactured laptop will hit the markets soon, the chief of a parliamentary body told different news media. With guideline from Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology and technical support of Malaysia's state-owned Telephone Shilpo Sangstha (Tesis), Bangladesh has been manufacturing the low-priced laptop, Doel.

Telecoms Minister Rajiuddin Ahmed Raju informed the parliamentary standing committee on the telecoms ministry that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to unveil the laptop. The committee chief, Mr. Hasanul Haq Inu, told reporters that four types of the laptops would be priced at Tk 10,000, Tk 12,000, Tk 21,000 and Tk 25,000.

The government organisations, including educational institutions, will be the first to buy the laptops, said Mr. Inu.

CULTURE, HERITAGE & TOURISM

Biman's Boeing 777 to fly soon

Biman Bangladesh Airline's first 777 airplane, a 777-300ER (extended range), is in the final stages of preparing to exit the 777 manufacturing line at Boeing's Everett factory, a press release from Boeing stated. The airplane, the first direct purchase for Bangladesh's flag carrier, will next move to the paint hangar for a coating in the

airline's brand new livery and undergo a final inspection before exiting the factory.

The 10 new aircrafts for which Biman signed a procurement deal with the US aircraft manufacturer Boeing involving Tk 17,250 crore include four 777-300ERs, four 787-8 Dreamliners and two 737-800s. The two Boeings will fly on long-haul routes including Dhaka-Manchester-New York, Dhaka-London-Dhaka, Dhaka-Rome-Dhaka and Dhaka-Sydney-Dhaka.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Kathmandu Ministerial Meet: *Dhaka for massive afforestation*

Dr Hasan Mahmud ,State Minister for Forest and Environment, urged upon the South Asian countries to undertake massive afforestation to cope with the challenges of global climate change.

At a ministerial meeting held in Kathmandu on September 21, 2011 Dr. Mahmud said “We must have a clear understanding and take proper steps to face the climate change. Cooperation among countries is urgently

needed as it's a gigantic job for one country to face”. The Bangladesh Minister also sought cooperation of all SAARC countries in ensuring food security and water for all in the region and meeting the electricity crisis by producing hydroelectric power using the potentials that Nepal and Bhutan have.

Former Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickramanayake, Nepalese Minister of Defence Sarat Singh Bhandari Former Pakistan foreign minister Sartaj Aziz also addressed the meeting .

FAO assistance for Agri Sector

Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations will give Bangladesh \$3.69 million technical assistance to build up capacity for investment in agricultural development. An agreement in this regard was signed on September 13, 2011 at the conference room of the Economic Relations Division (ERD) in the city. ERD secretary

and the FAO Representative to Bangladesh signed the agreement. The technical assistance was awarded to Bangladesh under Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP) in 2010. The FAO sources informed, Bangladesh was the first Asian country to be granted the GAFSP award in relation to the global initiatives as well as the government and the development partners' efforts to drastically increase investment in agriculture development.

Programme celebrating 50 years of Peace Corps volunteers in Bangladesh

More than fifty Peace Corps volunteers and their family members who worked in Bangladesh attended the event. Reminiscing their days in Bangladesh, the volunteers shared their experiences of working in various parts of the country to contribute in areas such as community development, infrastructure, agriculture, health and education.

Speaking on the occasion, Bangladesh Ambassador to the USA and State Minister, Mr. Akramul Qader recalled peoples' fight in the 60s for political and economic emancipation and the subsequent relentless efforts to take Bangladesh's rightful place in

the comity of nations. He said that the government of Bangladesh under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been working to graduate Bangladesh to a middle-income country by 2021. Ambassador Qader highlighted Bangladesh's achievements in socio-economic fields particularly in attaining MDGs for poverty alleviation, reducing infant and child mortality and ensuring gender parity. He said that Bangladesh is now a model country for the developing world and her leadership role is being lauded by the International community. In recognition to her contributions to global causes, Bangladesh received for the consecutive second year the United Nations Award. Last year Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina received the UN award for MDG and this year the UN has conferred upon Bangladesh the UN award titled "Digital Health for Digital Development".

PHOTO GALLERY



Programme celebrating 50 years of Corps in Bangladesh

News source:

Different daily and weekly newspapers published from Bangladesh