MESSAGE FROM AMBASSADOR M. HUMAYUN KABIR

Welcome to our web journal ‘Vibrant Bangladesh’. This the second issue of the Journal and it is dedicated to the memory of our language martyrs.

The Journal aims at highlighting the positive developments relating to Bangladesh and purports to work as a bridge between the Embassy, the Bangladesh community and friends of Bangladesh in the USA.

We are truly encouraged by the response from the readers. Your comments and suggestions have been most useful in bringing further improvements in the journal. We look forward to receiving your inputs in future as well.

SOCIAL CHANGES UNDERWAY IN BANGLADESH: CHIEF ADVISER TELLS WORLD LEADERS IN DAVOS

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed apprised World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland of a quiet social change underway in Bangladesh to attain economic stability through microcredit and non-formal education to address the issue of poverty alleviation and extremism.

"Bangladesh is a peaceful country--society must be inclusive in economic and political terms and sense of belonging must be generated for ensuring peace against extremism," he said during a plenary session on "The quest of Peace and Stability" of the World Economic Forum at the Congress Centre in the Swiss city.

Chief Adviser, who was one of five panelists, said the caretaker government nabbed extremist elements, opened suicide-bombing cases and punished the culprits.

"Not a single bullet was fired, not a single bomb went off during this government," he told the gathering of
global leaders, adding that people want a change in Bangladesh.

Dispelling misperception against his government, he said the present government is a constitutional government with "a major aim to hold free, fair and credible elections. He said that the caretaker government has decided to talk to political parties to have a unified vision of democracy and political stability in Bangladesh. He also said as the election would be getting closer the state of emergency would be lifted allowing all political parties to take part in the polls. Besides, the government strengthened the local-government system, which is important for sustaining democracy, he added.

The Chief Adviser said after assuming power, the government recast the Election Commission to prepare a credible voter list for fair polls. It also reformed the Anti-corruption Commission, Public Service Commission and accomplished separation of the judiciary from the executive. He also told the meet that Bangladesh has already achieved several Millennium Development Goals.

Chief Adviser drew the attention of the participants at Davos by highlighting the two major concerns Bangladesh constantly fights against; the effects of climate change and lack of duty-free access to the European Union and American markets.

Tony Blair, co-chairman of the forum, voiced strong support for Bangladesh in these two areas.

Asian Development Bank president H. Kuroda said to Dr. Fakruddin Ahmed: "I'm greatly impressed with your government's performance, particularly the reforms brought about in governance and economic sectors." He assured the Bank's continued support for infrastructure and power and energy sector development.

Chief Adviser's address provided food for thought to the participants who, this year, put emphasis on alleviation of poverty and hunger.

ONGOING REFORMS MAKE INVESTMENT IN BANGLADESH ATTRACTIVE: AMBASSADOR KABIR.

Bangladesh Ambassador to the United States Mr. M. Humayun Kabir in his keynote address at an Investment Seminar titled "Untapped Investment Opportunities in Bangladesh: Investment Climate, Capital Market and Growth in Bangladesh" at the Asia Society in New York underscored the fundamental strength of Bangladesh economy and described how it has been moving in positive direction over the years implemented by the present government. He suggested that the articulation of a consistent, coherent and credible message about brand Bangladesh by forming a compact among government, business and diplomacy so that Bangladesh could be presented as a new and attractive investment destination. He also noted that diplomacy could play the role of vanguard in attracting foreign investment.

David Fernandez of JP Morgan, an Investment Firm in Wall Street, remarked that Bangladesh is a good story to sell before the global investors and the ongoing economic reforms need to be intensified.

Dr. Ahsan Mansur of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) highlighted macroeconomic stability in Bangladesh, which could be a major attraction for foreign investment.

Mamun Rashid of Citibank in Dhaka termed Bangladesh a new frontier for investment and urged more policy flexibility and the need for Bangladesh to get connected to the global network.

Arif Dowla of ACI in Bangladesh, Munawar M Moin, Rahim Afroz Group of Bangladesh and Iftekharul Islam of Asian Tiger Capital Partners, Dhaka noted the disconnect between the global capital market and the opportunities available in Bangladesh and suggested for quick learning which could help Bangladesh benefit from the huge capital available in the global market.

The prestigious seminar was sponsored by the Asia Society and network of Bangladesh American professionals in the US. It was indeed a befitting arrangement as a follow up to the Chief Adviser's entreaty during his visit to New York in September last year attended by about 200 investors, economic experts, financial analysts and economists.

For more details, please click here.
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY INCREASINGLY RECOGNIZES BANGLADESH’S CONTRIBUTION IN PROMOTING MOTHER LANGUAGES: AMBASSADOR

International Community increasingly recognizes Bangladesh’s contribution in promoting mother languages, Mr. M. Humayun Kabir, Ambassador of Bangladesh to the United States made this assertion in his speech on the occasion of Shaheed and International Mother Language Day organized by the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington DC in cooperation with ‘Dristipat’.

In his speech, the Ambassador while acknowledging the contribution of valiant Bangladeshis in protecting mother tongue highlighted the significance of the Day. Apart from its historical role of inspiring independence movement in Bangladesh, the Day has now become the global icon of fundamental respect to others as the respect to one’s language is the prima facie of human rights. Observance of International Mother Language Day means recognition of linguistic diversity could build connectivity and network for peaceful and inclusive world. He urged expatriate Bangladeshis to project the spirit of the Day and share with different cultures around the world. Recalling the recent publication of a commemorative stamp on the day, he thanked the US Postal Department and appealed to the Washington DC Mayor to build a statuette in memory of the supreme sacrifices by the heros of Bangladesh.

Mrs. Judith Terra, Washington DC commissioner for Arts and Culture thanked the Embassy of Bangladesh for organizing such an inclusive multicultural event and sharing the message and spirit of the Day with the diverse communities in DC. She informed that the city hosts people who speak about 140 different languages. He hoped that through International Mother Language Day, it would be possible for all of them to come closer to each other's culture by generating respect and care among themselves.

‘I am proud to be here with you’ emotionally pronounced by Virginia Williams, mother of ex mayor of DC, who takes keen interest in languages. She said that the sacrifice of martyrs of Bangladesh will never go in vain.

Messages from Hon’ble President, Hon’ble Chief Adviser and Hon’ble Foreign Adviser and relevant information on the Day and Bangladesh as well were presented.

Songs and dances by artists from Bangladesh and some other countries featured the cultural segment of the program. Representatives from Embassies of Nepal, China, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Indonesia, India, Colombia, Philippines, Ethiopia, Zambia, and from a number of non-government organizations also participated in the event. Among those renowned band Bluegrass from USA, South American song, Bahasa song of Indonesia, Flamenco song, Andean song of Peru and dances from Nepal, Indonesia and Egypt were enjoyed by the large numbers of holiday crowd. The Bangladesh Embassy for the first time arranged the International Mother Language Program as an open air event with an aim to disseminate to wider audience the historical fact of sacrificing the lives to protect the right to mother tongue.

Hundreds of people of different languages and cultures living in DC areas, local American elites and Bangladeshi expatriates enjoyed the event despite freezing cold and inclement weather.

For more details please click here.

ARMY CHIEF GEN MOEEN U AHMED’S VISIT TO INDIA MAKES BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP STRONGER

Army chief Gen Moeen U Ahmed during his recently concluded visit met a number of India’s top political and military leaders to find specific ways to boost defence, transport and trade ties between the two neighbors. He also met Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee discussing ways to take bilateral relations forward for mutual benefit. A top official of the Indian foreign ministry said bilateral talks between the Bangladesh Army chief and top Indian political and military leaders would build up the momentum for better relations between the two countries.
General Moeen also met India's Minister of State for Commerce Jairam Ramesh and discussed various possibilities to further improve trade and commerce between Bangladesh and India. He was informed that the final notification on the duty-free export of 8 million pieces of readymade garments from Bangladesh would be issued soon.

Gen Moeen and Gen Kapoor held extensive discussions on the possible ways for further promoting cooperation between the armed forces of the two countries in areas including training, sharing of experience in disaster management, advanced information sharing on floods and tsunami and participation of troops of the two countries in the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.

Gen Moeen also held discussions with the Indian Minister of State for Defence MM Pallam Raju where ideas regarding training of armed forces personnel at each other's training institutions, capacity building in the area of specialized treatment at medical institutions, sharing of experience on disaster management and greater interaction on matters relating to participation of the troops of the two countries in UN Peacekeeping Operations came up.

**SUPREME JUDICIAL COMMISSION WILL REINFORCE THE PRINCIPLE OF JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE**

The decision by the government to set in motion a Supreme Judicial Commission certainly promises to bring about some fundamental and welcome changes in the way judges to the higher judiciary have been appointed so far. Under the terms of the proposed measure, the nine-member commission, headed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, will recommend the appointment of judges to the High Court and Appellate Divisions, which appointments will take effect once they receive the approval of the President. That will be quite a sea change, seeing that though the recommendations will be placed before the President through the office of the Prime Minister, the head of government or the party in power will not any more possess the authority to influence such appointments.

It is a development that will provide added impetus to the principle of judicial independence in Bangladesh, given the dismal experience we have so long had of politics coming in the way of a proper functioning of the judicial system.

The coming into being of the Supreme Judicial Commission should go a long way towards ending such parochial attitudes in the matter of appointments to the higher judiciary. With authority for recommending panels of judges for appointment vesting in the commission, it is patently a significant improvement on the practice having been followed in the past. In point of fact, the constitution of the commission, evenly balanced as it is through a presence of luminaries from the government and those outside it, will considerably reinforce the principle of judicial independence that has been in place since November last year. Overall, it will be a shot in the arm for democracy and rule of law in Bangladesh.

Off late, President Iajuddin Ahmed yesterday promulgated an ordinance to set up a Supreme Judicial Commission. *The Daily Star.*

**BANGLADESH PARTICIPATES IN ASAP SHOW AND MAGIC SHOW IN LAS VEGAS**

Twenty six garments manufacturers from Bangladesh took part in two different apparel shows, Apparel Sourcing Association Pavilion (ASAP) & Men’s Apparel Guild in California (MAGIC), in Las Vegas in USA.

The ASAP Show opened on 11th of February in the Venetian Hotel in the City of Las Vegas while MAGIC started on the 12th in the Las Vegas Convention Center. Both the Shows focused on sourcing of apparel and textile products from various countries.
around the world. A total number of 726 exhibitors from as many as 37 apparel sourcing countries are taking part in these two shows.

Bangladesh Ambassador to the USA M. Humayun Kabir and Bangladesh Consul General in Los Angeles Md. Abu Zafar visited both the shows. The Ambassador spent some time in the Bangladesh Pavilions of both the shows and shared ideas with Bangladesh exhibitors on how to promote Bangladesh apparel sector in US market. He enquired of them about the responses they'd been receiving from buyers. He encouraged them to continue to participate in such global shows.

Bangladesh Ambassador joined Mr. Frank Yuan, Chairman of ASAP Show at a dinner and Mr. David Pennes, Director Sourcing of MAGIC Show at a lunch and sought their support for promotion of Bangladeshi garments products in the US. Both Mr. Yuan and Mr. Pennes thanked the Ambassador for having Bangladesh exhibitors in their shows and also promised to extend right kind of support for Bangladesh to grow its business inside USA. They, in this connection, suggested that Bangladesh garments sector would greatly benefit if they can make extra efforts to refine their reputation and improve compliance issues.

BANGLADESHI CUISINE HELPS PROMOTE BANGLADESH CULTURE: AMBASSADOR

The Bangladesh Center for Community Development Inc. (BCCDI) organized its 3rd Pitha Uthsob (Home made cake festival) which was inaugurated by the Ambassador of Bangladesh to the USA Mr. M. Humayun Kabir. Many expatriate Bangladeshis and organizations including the Bangladesh Embassy led by the lady wife of the Ambassador, Mrs. Rokeya Kabir participated in the fair with 22 different types of homemade pithas.

Ambassador said in his opening remark that Bangladesh is rich with wide varieties of delicacies that has universal appeal. Food being the important element of our culture can very easily be used to project rich culture and heritage of Bangladesh to local community. He thanked organizers of the event and expressed hope that the event would encourage expatriate Bangladeshi organizations all over the United States to continue to organize such events to promote the Bangladeshi culture and heritage in USA.

At the end of the event, the organizers honored three best participants. Bangladesh Embassy won the gold as first prize. There was also a cultural presentation that portrayed Bangladeshi heritage.

BANGLADESH EMBASSY WOMEN ASSOCIATION ORGANIZED PRESENTATION ON BANGLADESH

Bangladesh Embassy Women Association (BEWA) in cooperation with The Hospitality Information and Service (THIS) organized a presentation on Bangladesh culture and heritage with particular emphasis on sari, an attire of country’s women folk, at the Bangladesh House. Mrs. Rokeya Kabir, lady wife of Ambassador Mr. M. Humayun Kabir welcomed the guests and introduced different types of saris in Bangladesh before them. Dr. Dilruba Nasrin, wife of Deputy Chief of Mission made a PowerPoint presentation on the basic facts of Bangladesh and social progress with special reference to women empowerment.

The program marked by fashion parade with different types of spectacular colorful saris, practical demonstration on how to wear sari, media presentation on tourism in Bangladesh, tribal folk dance and song performed by Tisha. The program...
End with serving lunch with traditional Bangladeshi delicacies.

The program generated enormous attention and interest in colorful Bangladeshi saris. Wives of diplomatic corps, high officials and local elites enjoyed the program.

It may be mentioned that BEWA works closely with THIS a non-profit organization committed to international understanding through educational, informational and cultural exchange with members of the diplomatic community based in Washington, DC.

BUSINESS AND DEVELOPMENT

FIRST BIOMASS PLANT IN BANGLADESH GENERATES RURAL ELECTRICITY FROM RICE HUSKS

The facility, located in an unelectrified town named Kapashia is part of a rural electrification project that aims to reach about 700,000 citizens through renewable energy.

The green power plant, the first ever of its kind in Bangladesh, is a 250 kW biomass gasification facility that generates renewable electricity from abundant agricultural residues such as rice husks.

Infrastructure Development Company Limited (IDCOL) provided concessionary loans and grants, sourced from IDA and the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), for a total project cost of 25 million taka (€250,000) of which the World Bank provided 60%.

The plant is now supplying environmentally friendly grid quality power to about 500 households and commercial entities for the first time. The unique plant in the town supplies all the required energy in a decentralized manner, without the need for backup from other sources.

The lessons learnt from installing this plant could be effectively used while preparing other biomass plants. This will certainly reduce the challenges for the next entrants and can attract new entrepreneurs to install biomass power plants in rural Bangladesh to meet the electricity demand. This will also create employment opportunities in rural Bangladesh.

Besides supporting the conventional grid based electricity sector, Bangladesh’s comparative advantage in the renewable energy resources is appreciated and the World Bank says it is willing to support Bangladesh’s future needs to develop its renewable energy sector if the government so requests.

GOVERNMENT APPROVED TWO MORE NEW EXPORT PROCESSING ZONES

The caretaker government approved two new export-processing zones (EPZ) at Munshiganj and Feni to accommodate around 250 foreign investors.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) board of governors chaired by Chief Adviser Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed.

During the past few months more than 50 foreign investors from Japan, Malaysia, Canada, China, Taiwan, Korea and Singapore have asked the government for industrial plots to relocate some of their factories to Bangladesh and to establish new enterprises.

*Some of the foreign investors went back as we failed to accommodate them on any industrial plots. Now we will invite them again and I hope we will be able to
allocate all the plots in the new EPZs,” Ashraf Yussuf, BEPZA executive chairman, said.

He said that the EPZs will be developed through public-private partnership. In this way the government will limit the amount of money it has to invest for the EPZ’s development. “We will ask the interested investors to develop the plots, roads and other things and the amount will be deducted from their future rent,” he said.

Some Japanese electronics and shoe and leather products textile accessories entrepreneurs from China were among those that had expressed interest in investing.

**WORLD’S BIGGEST SHOE FACTORY PROPOSED IN BANGLADESH**

South Korean company YoungOne Corp. will build the world’s largest shoe manufacturing plant near the southeastern Bangladesh city of Chittagong, a company director revealed this recently.

The 100-million-dollar plant will employ 30,000 people and produce 100,000 pairs of shoes a day once it starts in the middle of next year, operations director of the company Shikder Meshbahuddin Ahmed said. “It will be the biggest footwear factory in the world. We have already prepared the site and construction work will begin within the next two-three months,” according to him.

YoungOne was one of the first foreign companies to enter Bangladesh and is the leading private textile exporter. Last year it exported over 300 million dollars of garments from the country.

The company also has operations in Vietnam and China with annual sales of 800 million dollars.

It also owns Bangladesh’s first private export processing zone, which was approved by the country’s caretaker government last year. The export zone is designed to accommodate 500 factories.

Bangladeshi factories exported footwear worth 76 million dollars in the first half of the current financial year ending June 2007, a gain of 18.6 percent over the same period a year ago. *The Economic Times.*

**US NRBS LAUNCH VENTURE CAPITAL INVESTMENT SERVICES COMPANY**

A group of non-resident Bangladeshi (NRB) investors from USA has taken an initiative to set up a specialized SME-focused venture capital investment services company in the private sector in Bangladesh.

The company with the name of Venture Investment Partners Bangladesh (VIPB) Ltd has been registered as a public limited company and formally launched on January 29, 2008 at a function in Dhaka, says a press release. VIPB is a joint venture between US-based NRB institutional investors -- US-Bangladesh Investment Group, Inc and Terra Resources International, Inc -- and Bangladeshi institutional sponsors The City Bank Ltd, Southeast Bank Ltd, NCC Bank Ltd, National Life Insurance Company Ltd and TRIIMS Consultants Ltd.

The company was formally launched on January 29 at a function in Dhaka where M Haider Choudhury, chairman of National Life Insurance Company, Alamgir Kabir, chairman of Southeast Bank, Mani Rahman, director of US-Bangladesh Investment Group Inc (USA), and Dr Zia U Ahmed, chairman of VIPB, among others, were present.

Zia U Ahmed said VIPB will introduce innovative equity and quasi-equity (non-interest based) investment products and services to meet the specific needs of the SMEs (small and medium enterprises) in Bangladesh, particularly for the low-end small and cottage industry segments.

Haider Chowdhury said venture capital investment can be a new instrument for insurance companies to invest in the growth and development of SMEs. Alamgir Kabir emphasised the role of banks in supporting venture capital operations for the expansion of SMEs.

The NRBs formed the US-Bangladesh Investment Group Inc in USA to provide a formal and professional platform for NRBs to invest in Bangladesh. *The Daily Star.*
BANGLADESHI WINS OSCARS 2007
SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL AWARDS

Nafees Bin Zafar, a proud Bangladeshi has won the Scientific and Technical Academy Awards 2007 in OSCARS. The award was declared at The Beverly Wilshire on Saturday, February 9, 2008. He was awarded for the development of the fluid simulation system at Digital Domain. This influential and flexible production-proven system incorporates innovative algorithms and refined adaptations of published methods to achieve large-scale water effects.

COUNTRY’S SOFTWARE EXPO ENDED
WITH POTENTIALS AND PROMISES

The five-day long mega ICT exposition of the country, BASIS SoftExpo 2008, ended on Feb 18 with the view that there is no alternative to ICT. Several milestones were achieved in this year’s SoftExpo. The show successfully drew the government’s attention to various key issues and industry barriers.

While inaugurating the fair, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed touched on issues such as second submarine cable and internet pricing and promised that the government will work on such issues.

More than 200 one-to-one matchmaking sessions between local and foreign companies took place. This year the fair drew nearly 1, 00,000 visitors. They included people from different segments of the ICT industry such as local and multinational ICT companies, mobile application development companies, IT training institutes, public and private universities, IT consultants, foreign delegates, politicians and high-level government officials.

Besides regular exhibition, more than 15 seminars, roundtables and workshops were organized by BASIS and other organizations. Delegates from 39 Danish companies interacted with 120 local software companies on the first three days of SoftExpo. Local firms have already submitted 15 pilot projects to the Danish companies. This matchmaking opened up a new window of opportunities for 20 Bangladeshi companies to develop their partnership. Delegates from seven Japanese companies also interacted with 41 local companies during the fair in a bid to expand their businesses in Bangladesh.

Main attractions at SoftExpo 2008 were “Humanoid Robot” by International Islamic University, “Scheme Age Robot” by Khulna University of Engineering and Technology, “Sell to Net” SMS banking software by Upload Yourself System, “Process Light” -- a paperless office related software by International Office Machine (IOM), “Tally 9” by STM Vision Infotech etc.
BANGLADESHI AMONG WINNERS OF CHAMPIONS OF THE EARTH AWARD 2008

Renowned environmentalist Dr Atiq Rahman of Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS) has won this year's Champions of the Earth Award for the Asia Pacific region announced by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on the 10th Special Session of its Governing Council.

The other recipients of Champions of the Earth 2008 are Helen Clark, prime minister of New Zealand, Balgis Osman-Elasha, a senior researcher at Sudan's Higher Council for Environment & Natural Resources, Henrietta Elizabeth Thompson, former energy and environment minister of Barbados, Prince Albert II of Monaco, former US Senator Timothy E Wirth and Abdul-Qader Ba-Jamal, secretary general of the People's General Congress of Yemen.

In the award letter, Achim Steiner, UN under-secretary general and UNEP executive director, observed that Dr Atiq is one of the leading specialists in the field through his national and international experience in sustainable development, and environment and resource management.

Dr Atiq's publications on the subjects of environment and development in Bangladesh can be a reference for peers, he said adding that the post-graduate course that Dr Atiq had designed on "Sustainable Development Challenges and North South Dialogue" is innovative.
**PHOTO GALLERY**

**Asia Society Seminar on untapped Investment Opportunities in Bangladesh - below**

1. A section of audience at the Investment Seminar in New York
2. Ambassador Kabir with Nikhil Deogun of the Wall Street Journal
3. Another view of audience at the Investment Seminar

**Observance of Shaheed Dibosh and International Mother Language Day – below**

1. Patriotic song from Bangladesh
2. A folk dance from Indonesia
3. Traditional dance from Indonesia
4. Egyptian Tannoura dance
5. Dance from Sri Lanka
6. A cross section of distinguished audience
7. Language Day song from Bangladesh
8. Banjo from Blue Grass music group
9. Nepali colorful dance
Participation of Bangladesh Embassy Women Association in Pitha Uthshob organized by BCCDI

Ambassador visits pitha stalls  Bangladesh Embassy receives top award in Pitha Uthshob  A section of audience in cultural program

Presentation on Bangladeshi sari and culture by Bangladesh Embassy Women Association

If you need any further information or if you have any suggestions or if you do not wish to receive this web journal, please email: webjournal@bangladoot.org or mzulqarnain@gmail.com

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