January, 2008

HIGH LIGHTS

- Help Bangladesh become middle income country: Chief Adviser in NRB Conference
- Sidr brought sympathetic impact: Ambassador
- Foreign Adviser for protective status to Bangladeshis
- Celebration of 37th Victory Day in the Embassy
- Climate change - challenge for Bangladesh: President
- Visit of Chief of Army Staff
- USA hailed separation of Judiciary from Administration
- Bangladesh welcomes NPDA 2007
- Bangladeshi Americans with mainstream society
- Business and Development
- Science and Technology
- PHOTO GALLERY

MESSAGE FROM AMBASSADOR M. HUMAYUN KABIR

I welcome you to our web journal and on behalf of my colleagues and my own behalf I wish you all a very happy New Year. We do hope that 2008 will bring more peace, progress and happiness for all of you.

This monthly journal is intended to keep our friends, well wishers and community members informed about important developments on Bangladesh, and to promote Bangladesh in an objective manner to the international community. We also believe that this journal will perhaps create a new connectivity between all of us to explore new level of understanding and to strengthen cooperation between the Embassy of Bangladesh in Washington DC and those who love to see a democratic, dynamic, dignified and vibrant Bangladesh.

We, however, acknowledge the fact that this new initiative has to go a long way, and in this process of learning we would always appreciate and welcome your inputs, observations and suggestion to improve this effort.

DEMOCRACY HAS NO ALTERNATIVE IN BANGLADESH. CHIEF ADVISER REITERATED PLEDGE TO HOLD ELECTION BY 2008

The chief adviser, Fakhruddin Ahmed announced that his government would soon open dialogue with political parties for transition to democracy through holding free, fair and neutral elections.

In an address to the nation, marking the completion of one year of caretaker government, he also said lifting restrictions on indoor politics outside Dhaka throughout the country was under consideration.

Referring to the formation of incumbent caretaker government in post 1/11 milieu, the chief adviser said, 'In the world history such spontaneous transition is rare, but we are going to do it. Because, we believe that democracy has no alternative.' In categorical terms, he said the government was committed to holding parliamentary polls by December 2008 according to the Election Commission roadmap — if possible, ahead of it. 'And there is no room for confusion about it,' he said reaffirming his government's position.

He urged political parties to take the advantage of this situation and build themselves as democratic and corruption-free. And 'the sooner, the better.' He made it clear that no political party or force is an opponent of this government.

The chief adviser admitted that overall prices of some essential commodities rose to a level that created a miserable situation for the citizens. He noted that two big floods and devastating cyclone Sidr in the same year hit hard the food production-and-supply system alongside various losses and damages. As a result, 15 lakh tonnes of food deficit would take place; he told the nation saying that the government had taken all-out steps to face this unprecedented situation. Unfortunately prices of rice along
with different commodities have shot up on the international market, he said.

Listing various steps taken by the government to stabilize the domestic market, including Open Market Sale (OMS) at fair price, freshly introduced VGF cards, Test Relief and Food for Work programs, the chief adviser said the government had decided to import 10 lakh tons of rice on urgent basis. He also mentioned some other steps under the agricultural recovery plan for increasing farm production.

Chief Adviser thanked all for successfully tackling the aftermath of the powerful cyclone 'Sidr' with cooperation of all, including people, civil and military administrations, NGOs, foreign countries and development partners.

On the ongoing purge against corruption, he said that the government at the outset had taken tough stand against irregularities and corruption, and all-out efforts to bring the corrupt, irrespective of position, to justice. Perhaps none could have imagined it only a year before, he observed.

On the role of the military, he said the cooperation that has been given by the armed forces in governing the country and facing disaster in aid of civil administration deserves a special mention. Turning to activities of the Election Commission, he said the government had recast the Election Commission as completely neutral and acceptable to people which has made draft of election-related amended laws and rules and regulations, which would be finalized soon. He also mentioned that preparation of voters’ list with photograph is progressing fast.

On the economic front, the chief adviser said despite political unrest and soaring prices of fuel and imported essential commodities, economic growth rose to 6.5 per cent in the last fiscal due to remarkable growth in industry and service sectors. The rate of increase of export was 16 per cent, despite various adversities. He further said foreign investment in the country's EPZs has more than doubled in six months from July to December in 2007.

About manpower export, he said recently opportunities to export manpower to the Middle East and various southeastern countries have been increasing gradually following bilateral and multilateral initiatives of the government. The number of outbound workers’ clearance certificates rose over 8 lakh in the year 2007 compared to that of 3.81 lakh in 2006.

Chief Adviser in his conclusion remarked, 'Like you, I don't want the country to revert to anarchy as before January 11. I want to see accountability and democratic trend established in all spheres of the state through reforms. I want to see the reputation of Bangladesh in the world forum as a shining example of anthropo-religious harmony.” —— we want to see this day next year a service-oriented government elected through democratic process.

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**FIRST NRB CONFERENCE IN DHAKA**

**CHIEF ADVISER URGED EXPATRIATES TO HELP THE COUNTRY BECOME MIDDLE-INCOME.**

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed called on the expatriate Bangladeshis to help the country become a middle income state by 2021 with their long-term contributions at the non-resident Bangladeshi (NRB) conference in Dhaka.

"I encourage NRBS to continue and expand these efforts to ensure that the skills developed abroad by our citizens can be used to the fullest advantage of our nation,” Chief Adviser urged the audience comprising over 1,000 expatriates who attended the NRB conference organized by Scholars Bangladesh.

“It is now necessary more than ever to create the environment and opportunity for the NRBS to make long-term contributions to the socio-economic progress of the nation,” he added. He also urged the NRBS to establish a forum through which they can formally engage in activities with local administration and organizations.

He expressed confidence that with the support and cooperation of all citizens living at home and abroad our common goal to transform the country into a middle-income by 2021, coinciding with 50 years of Independence and make the land abode of peace, progress and harmony for future generations could be achieved.

He expressed his belief that the NRB Conference would help overcome many of our future challenges by building a bridge between scholars and entrepreneurs at home and abroad and hoped that this occasion provided an opportunity to drill down into some of the challenges and opportunities facing Bangladesh today and to propose strategic solutions where they could extend helping hands.

The Chief Adviser handed out eight awards of excellence to artist Monirul Islam and singer Kalim Sharafi for arts, entrepreneur and academic Iqbal Quadir and farmer-scientist Haripada Kapali, doctors ABM Fazlul Karim and MR Khan for health, and professors Fazle Hussain and Jamal Nazrul Islam for education and research.

Chief Adviser also hoped that NRB can play a role in investment in Bangladesh by availing the investment-friendly atmosphere and attractive incentives for NRB and foreign investor. He said this when Hansen Clarke, the Michigan state senator of USA paid a courtesy call on him. He also said NRBS could play a role for passage of a bill placed in the US Congress regarding duty free access of Bangladeshi goods to US market.
Experts estimate that expatriate Bangladeshis could now invest $10 to $15 billion in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is in a suitable position to grasp the opportunities of attracting funds available globally these days.

**CYCLONE SIDR BROUGHT IN A VERY SYMPATHETIC IMPACT: AMBASSADOR KABIR**

Just aftermath of the devastation of flood, the people of Bangladesh faced another disaster cyclone Sidr which claimed more than three thousand lives, loss of crops and serious damage to rural infrastructure and threat to the environment. With the help of early warning and preparedness system, local administration evacuated some 3.2 million people who lived along the coastline and soon after the storm passed, government quickly began distributing 4,000 tons of rice along with thousands of tents and blankets and deployed 700 medical teams. This was a ‘significant mitigating effect in this emergency’.

United States sent naval ships to participate in the emergency relief operation. US military has delivered more than 113,000 kilograms of food and medicines, 54,000 liters of drinking water and treated 2,355 people. The emergency operation has the ramification of transformation into a long-term civil operation for reconstruction and rehabilitation through USAID.

Immediately after Sidr, the Embassy of Bangladesh took a number of initiatives to sensitize the local people and the expatriate community about the urgent need for extending assistance to the Sidr victims. Accordingly, Bangladesh Embassy in Washington, DC and Consulates General in New York and Los Angeles convened a number of meetings with the leaders of Bangladesh associations in the United States with a view to seek their assistance in reaching out to wider sections of the expatriate Bangladeshi community to come forward for Sidr victims and to inform ways of donating funds to the Chief Adviser’s Relief and Welfare Fund. Besides, Ambassador Kabir appeared in local TV channels to apprise viewers of the ongoing rescue and relief operations, and the initiatives of the government to meet this challenge on a medium and long term basis. [Ambassador Kabir in a meeting with leaders of Bangladeshi Associations urging them to come forward for Sidr victims]

Ambassador Kabir said that both the government and people in USA sincerely want to assist in the relief operation. He considers that this is a very friendly and humane gesture to the people of Bangladesh. He also acknowledged the positive response that he has received from the members of Bangladesh community in the USA.

The US House of Representatives unanimously voted on a Resolution H. Res. 842, sponsored by Congressman Steven Rothman of Foreign Affairs Committee and supported by members of the US Bangladesh Congressional Caucus. The Resolution expressed sympathy, support to the people of Bangladesh and urged US Government to provide support to the people affected by the Cyclone Sidr in the southwest Bangladesh. Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury said, “The adoption of the bill can be viewed as recognition of healthy US-Bangladesh relations. I am deeply satisfied and Bangladesh is grateful to their friends in the US legislature.”

It is reported that the bill was voted at this time, despite a very crowded calendar. This passage of the bill is one of the manifestations of Embassy-community relationship.

Bangladesh community through the Embassy and Consulates in New York and Los Angeles sent around six and half crores of Taka directly to Chief Adviser’s Relief and Welfare Fund.

**FOREIGN ADVISER REQUESTED PROTECTED STATUS TO BANGLADESHIS**

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury addressed a letter to US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to consider granting Temporary Protected Status to Bangladeshi nationals in the USA. He also expressed thanks for the “generous support” received from the US in the post-Sidr relief and rehabilitation operations and elaborated on Bangladesh's “strategy to deal with the emerging challenge” of natural disaster.

In the letter, the adviser has also urged Secretary Rice that it would “greatly help” if, given the current suffering of Bangladeshis due to the calamity, the US authorities could grant Temporary Protected Status to Bangladeshi nationals staying in the US under the provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

The Bangladesh Embassy in Washington is maintaining close contacts with concerns authorities in USA for this purpose.

**CELEBRATION OF 36TH ANNIVERSARY OF VICTORY DAY IN THE EMBASSY**

The 37th Great Victory Day was observed at the Chancery of the Embassy of Bangladesh in Washington DC with due respect and solemnity.

The first part of the program began with the hoisting of national flag ceremonially by His Excellency M. Humayun Kabir. On the occasion of this auspicious day, messages from Hon’ble President, Hon’ble Chief Adviser and Hon’ble Foreign Adviser were read out. This part of the program concluded with the special prayer seeking for the salvation of the departed souls of our valiant freedom
On 16th December, 1971, the Bangladesh Army, led by President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, carried out a National Liberation War. The fighters, and those who lost their lives in Cyclone Sidr and for continued blessing for peace, progress and prosperity of the country.

The second part of the Program was marked by discussion on the significance of the day, inauguration of painting exhibition of the Bangladeshi American painters and presentation of a cultural program on the evolution of Independence.

Ambassador of Bangladesh to the United States, M. Humayun Kabir welcomed the guests. In his opening address, Ambassador Kabir said that the glorious Victory was achieved through unimaginable miseries and supreme sacrifices of millions and paid deepest gratitude to allies and friends, who made sacrifices alongside the people of Bangladesh to make the country free of occupied forces. He clearly mentioned that still today, the spirt and energy of Liberation War act as the driving force to the resilience, creativity of the people of Bangladesh to face challenges of the day. In this regard, he cited a good number of instances where Bangladesh made comparatively praiseworthy progress in various socio-economic indicators, creativity of the people as manifested in the developing concept of micro lending and changing pattern of country’s economy. He mentioned that Bangladesh as a responsible member of international community is already sharing its expertise to build broken societies around the world and would continue to do so in future. He also mentioned the various ongoing reform programs initiated by the present Government to accelerate the development process. He stressed on the need for supporting these reform initiatives and appealed to the international community and Bangladesh community, living in USA in particular, to come forward to support the Government.

Dr. Mohsin Siddique, a Bangladeshi national, activists in the Washington DC in 1971 worked with the people of USA and in Capitol Hill to mobilize support for Bangladesh, gave a brief account of his activities in those days.

Dr. William Greenough, Professor of Johns Hopkins University in his speech mentioned the challenges he faced at that crucial day. He stated that he was about to be blacklisted by then U.S. administration. But he did not retreat from telling the truth. He played key role by establishing Bangladesh Information Center in Washington DC during the period of Independence.

Mr. Peter Blood, son of Mr. Archer Blood who was the Consul General of the United States in Dhaka in 1971, vividly described the days of struggle. He read out his father’s fax messages that courageously accommodated true picture of the atrocities inflicted by the then occupied forces on the freedom but peace loving people of Bangladesh to his government despite the fact that the then U.S. Administration had different policy. Mr. Blood’s emotional but vivid deliberation drew huge appreciation from the audience.

Mr. Wahed Hossaini, a member of Bangladeshi community activist, also spoke highlighting the significance of the Day.

The Embassy arranged a painting and cultural program to commemorate the Victory Day. 22 Bangladesh origin painters now living in different States of USA took part in this week long exhibition. Dr. Franklin S. Odo, Director of Asian Pacific American Program of the Smithsonian Institute inaugurated the Exhibition. In his remark, Mr. Odo expressed their readiness to work with the Bangladeshi community in the process of creating more diverse and inclusive American society and history. He expressed deep appreciation for the creative works of Bangladeshi artists.

Artists participating in the Exhibition announced the donation of 30% of the proceeds to the Chief Adviser’s Relief and Welfare Fund. This created lot of enthusiasm among the audience.

Dhroopad, a local cultural organization portrayed the evolution of freedom struggle that started from Language Movement and culminated through armed struggle and eventual victory on 16 December, 1971 through songs and dances. The unique feature of this program was that the entire was conducted by the second generation Americans of Bangladesh origin. Their outstanding performance elevated the morale of the audience.
audience and most of the audience felt proud before local Americans, dignitaries and other high officials.

The Program was attended by large number of Bangladeshis living in greater Washington DC, local Americans, high officials from Capitol Hill and US Government offices, members of diplomatic corps, intellectuals, private sector and Non Government Organization graced the occasion. The Program ended with serving of traditional Bangladeshi delicacies.

**CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGES PROGRESS IN BANGLADESH – PRESIDENT IAJJUDDIN**

The significant achievement on poverty reduction and improvement of human development during the last few decades may be challenged by the impact of climate change and other associated disasters such as floods, river bank erosion, land degradation and intrusion of salinity. This was stated by Professor Dr. Iajuddin Ahmed, Hon’ble President of Bangladesh at a seminar at New Orleans, Louisiana organized by Soil Science Society of America.

Touching on the strategies of the Government to address those challenges, the President asserted that the poverty reduction strategy paper had taken into account of environmental health, energy, agriculture, natural resources, climate change and disaster management. He added that improving the environmental management to reduce poverty required pooling of local knowledge and experience as well as mainstreaming the biodiversity concern into all sectoral development strategies. Touching on the specific areas that may suffer serious consequences from climate change, he cited two processes, such as, desertification and salinization of land, to intensify in the changed circumstances.

Mr. Ray C Nagin, Mayor of New Orleans paid a courtesy call on the Hon’ble President and presented him with the key to the city. He handed over a proclamation declaring the November 05 as Bangladesh Day in New Orleans. They discussed the effects of natural disasters in Bangladesh and the United States with particular focus on Louisiana.

[Hon’ble President Dr. Iajuddin Ahmed is receiving award at New Orleans University]

During his visit to Ohio State University (OSU), Hon’ble President was given red carpet reception and key to the city by Mayor of Wooster City. The president made a keynote speech on "Educational System in Bangladesh” at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Centre.

[Chief of Army Staff with media in NY]

Among the guests Jim Carmichael, state representative, Dr Rattan Lal, president of the Soil Science Society of America, and Humayun Kabir, Ambassador of Bangladesh to the USA were present.

President of OSU Prof. Gordon Gee stated that OSU would assist Bangladesh address the Arsenic challenges and increase exchange of scholars and scholarship to Bangladeshi students.

**USA HAILED BANGLADESH ON SEPARATION OF THE JUDICIARY FROM THE EXECUTIVE.**

The United States government congratulated the caretaker government's initiative to implement this reform process. "Separation of the judiciary from the executive is an important step towards ensuring greater judicial independence and brings Bangladesh closer to the return to democracy.” was the comment of US Government. This historical decision came into effective from November 01, 2007.

**VISIT OF CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF TO THE USA**

Bangladesh army chief General Moeen U Ahmed visited the United States in October, 2007. During this visit he met Congressman Joseph Crowley, high officials at UN, interacted with communities and media.

[Chief of Army Staff and Ambassador in a community reception in New York]

US Congress Joseph Crowley said in a meeting with army chief that the ongoing anti-corruption drive has brought down Bangladesh's position in the corruption perception index. Reiterating his support for the anti-corruption drive, Crowley said eradication of corruption is a precondition for democracy and progress. He also gave assurance of all sorts of US assistance to address arsenic problems.

In a civic reception in Boston, General Moeen U Ahmed said fears over the uncertainty of holding free, fair, credible elections will be proved baseless by the end of 2008, as the government will take adequate measures in the remaining 14 months.

[Chief of Army Staff and Ambassador in a community reception in New York]

He said $129 million illegally earned money siphoned off overseas has been brought back to Bangladesh and deposited in the central bank. He said another $72 million has been recovered but is stuck in legal disputes and
another $214 million would be brought to Bangladesh soon.

The army chief also cited the caretaker government’s achievements, such as recasting and reforming the Election Commission, Anti-corruption Commission, Public Service Commission and the University Grants Commission.

**BANGLADESH WELCOMES THE INTRODUCTION OF “NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT ACT 2007” IN THE US CONGRESS**

Bangladesh welcomes the introduction of “New Partnership for Development Act 2007” in the US Congress aiming at reducing global extreme poverty through eliminating tariff on all products that originate in LDCs. We thank Congressman Jim McDermott for his initiative in introducing this long awaited bill. This bill is expected to create new opportunities for employment and thereby alleviating poverty and ensuring social progress in Bangladesh. The bill needs to be passed by the both House and Senate and be endorsed by U.S. President in order to be treated as Act.

Support of US law makers, labor unions and apparel and textile association and support of African LDCs are essential to get bill through the Congress. Respect to workers’ rights, payment of minimum wages, maintenance of acceptable working environment are the key challenges for inclusion of Bangladesh in the bill. It is encouraging to see that Bangladesh community particularly in Kansas and North Carolina are at this moment actively working to mobilize support for the bill. The Embassy of Bangladesh in Washington DC is relentlessly working to mobilize necessary support for this purpose and believe communities’ different areas will be supportive of the bill and accordingly come forward to engage themselves.

“BANGLADESH CARETAKER GOVERNMENT IS AN OPPORTUNITY. IT SHOULD BE GIVEN TIME TO COMPLETE THE REFORMS”: CONGRESSMAN JOSEPH CROWLEY

Terming the role of Caretaker government of Bangladesh “as an opportunity”, speakers in a seminar in the Heritage Foundation, a leading think tank in DC commented that the caretaker government should be given time to complete the reforms.

Commending the role of the Caretaker government for their bold initiatives including anti-corruption drives, Congressman the Honorable Joseph Crowley (D-NY), Co-chair of Bangladesh Caucus stated that this government should be allowed time to complete the reform process. Giving a brief outline of pre-1/11 situation, Congressman stated that Bangladesh deserves much better economic performance if corruption weren’t that rampant. Referring to his recent meeting with Hon’ble Chief Adviser of Bangladesh in New York on 23 September last, Congressman Crowley said that he was once again assured that the election will take place by no
later than December 2008 after completing the institutional reforms.

Congressman Crowley made the above statements during his keynote address on “Bangladesh: Democracy at a Crossroad” in the Heritage Foundation.

**CONGRESSMEN LAUDED THE PROGRESS IN BANGLADESH**

Congressman Mike Honda (D-Cal) and Congresswoman Nancy Boyda (D-Kansas) lauded the socio-economic developments in Bangladesh. Their comments came during the 21st annual convention of the Federation of Bangladeshi Associations in North America (FOBANA) held in Wichita, Kansas.

Congresswoman Boyda lauded the progress in Bangladesh while referring to the resiliency and creativity of the people of Bangladesh that helped attain growth of GDP despite occasional natural harsh conditions and political uneasiness in Bangladesh. She pointed out that Bangladesh and United States value hard working and dedicated people. "You have done so well" announced the Congresswoman to recognize the hard working and resilient people of Bangladesh.

Vice Chair of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) Congressman Mike Honda, who came all the way from his constituency in California to Wichita to attend the FOBANA also spoke highly about Bangladeshis in USA. "Size and strength of Bangladesh community is impressive". He went on elaborating that Bangladeshi Americans earns $12,000.00 more than the average annual income of USA and their educational levels are higher than those of average Americans.

Ambassador Humayun Kabir, attended the Convention as Chief Guest, thanked the Congressmen for their support for Bangladesh as well as members of Bangladesh community in the USA. Regarding assimilation with the local communities, Ambassador Kabir categorically stated that more integration of Bangladesh communities with the local communities would serve both the countries in a mutually beneficial ways. He stressed on sharing rich cultural heritage of Bangladesh with the local communities through different events including FOBANA.

Both Congresswoman Nancy Boyda and Congressman Mike Honda expressed keen interest in the culture and traditions of Bangladesh while enjoying a cultural presentation of artists from Bangladesh community.

Ambassador Kabir presented them with sets of information booklets on Bangladesh published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Embassy offered mobile consular services and opened an information booth which generated great enthusiasm and interests among the participants.

**ANIS AHMED APPOINTED AS MARYLAND GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONER.**

Governor of the State of Maryland Hon. Martin O'Mally has appointed Anis Ahmed, a Bangladeshi American as a Commissioner for the Governor's Commission on Asian Pacific American for a term of four years. As a Commissioner, Mr. Ahmed's responsibilities will include, among others, protection and promotion of the rights and interests of the Asian Pacific American community, promotion of economic development within the Asian community, and international trade between Maryland companies planning business in Asian and Pacific countries. In this regard, Mr. Anis Ahmed could liaison between the potential investors of Maryland and Bangladesh.

**DR. NURUN NABI APPOINTED AS COUNCILMAN OF PLAINSBORO TOWNSHIP.**

Dr. Nuran Nabi, a Bangladeshi American scientist and community leader has been appointed as Councilman of Plainsboro Township of New Jersey. Such appointment recognizes his work with mainstream society. He has been assigned to the Liaison Committee for township population.
SOUTH KOREA TO INVEST $7B IN ENERGY SECTOR

Bangladesh Government is considering the US$ 7 billion investment proposal of South Korea in the country's energy sector.

A South Korean consortium comprising government, the private sectors and the Ministry of Commerce, Industries and Energy approached Bangladesh with a proposal of investment in the energy sector in October 2005. They proposed to invest US$ 2 billion at the preliminary stage for the exploration and extraction of coal and production of coal-based power. In the next phase, they proposed another investment of US$ 5 billion in the infrastructure and exploration and extraction of gas in deep sea.

The Korean investors proposed implementation of the investment projects based on government-to-government cooperation.

Loxon Global Energy, one of the two private companies in the consortium, earlier signed a MoU with the Board of Investment (BoI) Bangladesh to invest in energy sector. The company was given the approval by the BoI to open a liaison office in Bangladesh. The Loxon Global Energy had applied to the Bureau of Mineral Development (BMD) for getting licence to explore coal in Bangladesh. The BMD authorities recently.

INTEL OPENS NEW VISTA FOR BANGLADESH

Technology icon and Intel Corporation Chairman Craig R Barrett visited the country to open the Bangladesh chapter of the chipmaker's global initiative in a bid to help the rural community by making technology available to them.

To drive the World Ahead Program, the chipmaker teamed up with Grameen Solutions (GS) to promote economic and social development through ICT.

Based on the agreement, Intel and Grameen will jointly promote and support digital inclusion projects across Bangladesh to improve education, connectivity, and access to technology, localized Internet content and software application.

Intel will also work with local software companies to develop localized Internet content and software for the government, schools and telecen tres, because rich and localized content is essential to build a knowledge based society.

"We would like to work with the communications industry to bring the latest in wireless technology in Bangladesh, to ensure that all citizens, all communities have access to the Internet and also to work with the government to show the value of e-governance to citizens.” Barrett said.

Intel and Grameen Solutions will work side by side in order develop and maintain WiMAX infrastructure and provide cheap service to the people. If the technology is made available in the rural areas it will nourish the Internet-related businesses, which in turn will create a hi-tech trend, generating more revenue.
Bangladesh Consulate in Los Angeles in consultation with Bangladesh Embassy in Washington DC worked hard to make this visit a success.

MATERNAL MORTALITY FALLS LARGELY DUE TO SAFER ABORTION AND BETTER EMERGENCY CARE

Bangladesh has seen an enormous fall in maternal mortality over the last three decades, due in large part to better access to safe abortion services, as well as emergency obstetric care, according to a report published in *The Lancet*, special issue Women Deliver. The report is hopeful that the Millennium Development Goal Five, which aims to reduce maternal mortality by 75% will be achieved in Bangladesh.

According to their findings, mortality dropped by 68% in the ICDDR, B region - there was a drop of 54% in the government region during the 1976-2005 periods. It was not until 1989 that maternal mortality started to fall significantly (5% annually). The introduction of the skilled-attendance strategy for births in 1990 coincided with the beginning of a faster decline in the ICDDR, B area.

They conclude that the achievement of MDG-5 is not an unattainable dream for Bangladesh. *The Lancet.*

GRAMEEN SHAKTI RECEIVES THE RIGHT LIVELIHOOD AWARD 2007

A woman engineer demonstrating a Solar Home System

"... for bringing sustainable light and power to thousands of Bangladeshi villages, promoting health, education and productivity".

Grameen Shakti, has installed more than 110,000 solar home systems in rural Bangladesh. It has shown that solar energy applications can be scaled up massively and rapidly to provide an affordable and climate-friendly energy option for the rural.
BANGLADESHI DEVELOPS HUMANOID FROM SCRAP

A Bangladeshi graduate student is developing a robot capable of picking up objects, mopping floors and performing other simple tasks at the fraction of the cost of other humanoids.

Feroz Ahmed Siddiky of the International Islamic University in Chittagong says his “IRobo” responds to voice commands, has spatial intelligence and is cheap because it’s made from scrap materials he’s collected from electronic shops and car mechanics.

"It can also be used for some risky jobs like in coal mines, where workers commonly suffer many accidents," Siddiky has been working on the robot for two years and says he has got another year’s worth of engineering to do before its completed. He said he is discussing commercial production of the robot with an Australian software firm. "I hope people will be able to buy it for less than $1,000," he added.

YOUNG RESEARCHER DEVELOPS ARSENIC FILTER

Dulaly Chowdhury, a young researcher, has recently developed a filter, called ‘Earth Filter’, for ensuring arsenic-free water with the support of Earth-Foundation, a Dhaka based NGO.

‘The filter has been developed by using the local technology of Bangladesh. A 15-litre reserve tank is on the top, an arsenic purification cartridge is in the middle and a tank to hold arsenic-free water is below the filter’ said Dulaly.

The water purification rate of the Earth Filter is faster than any other arsenic filters available in Bangladesh, according to the inventor. Arsenic, iron, temperature, pH and conductivity of the tube-well water of a few districts have been tested in the laboratory. The filtered water is crystal clear and free from bacteria. The concentration of arsenic, iron, temperature, pH and conductivity of filtered water met the WHO’s and Bangladesh’s standard. The New Age BD

BANGLADESHI PROJECT GETS AGA KHAN AWARD FOR ARCHITECTURE

His Highness the Aga Khan announced nine recipients of the 2007 Aga Khan Award for Architecture. This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Award, which was founded in 1977, Says an Aga Khan Development Council.

One of the winners, the primary school project in Rudrapur, a village in North West Bangladesh was hand-built in four months by architects, local craftsmen, pupils, parents and teachers, using traditional methods and materials of construction but adapting them in new ways with an innovative twist. The project successfully exemplified use of local resources and appropriate technology in an innovative ways. The New Nation
Mr. Robert B. Zoellick, World Bank President calls on Hon’ble Chief Adviser. Dr. Iftekhar Chowdhury, Hon’ble Foreign Adviser and Mr. Zakir Ahmed Khan, Alternate Executive Director, World Bank, were present.

Hon’ble Chief Adviser addressing World Leaders Forum in Columbia University.

Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Bin Haji Ahmad Badawi calls on Chief Adviser Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed. Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Hon’ble Adviser for Foreign Affairs was present during the meeting.

Chief Adviser Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed addresses and replies questions from audiences at Asia Society.

Civic Reception in honor of Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed, Hon’ble Chief Adviser sponsored by Bangladeshi Communities in New York. Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Hon’ble Adviser for Foreign Affairs and Ambassador M. Humayun Kabir attended.

U.S. branch of Bangladesh Hindu Boudhha Christian Oikya Parishad called on the Chief Adviser at his hotel suite. Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Hon’ble Adviser for Foreign Affairs was present during the call on.

H.E. M. Humayun Kabir, Ambassador of Bangladesh to the United States inaugurated the 21st FOBANA held in Wichita, Kansas.

Ambassador discussing with community leaders on Sidr relief efforts.

[Participants of NRB Conference in Dhaka- below]
[Observance of Victory Day in the Embassy – below]

[Eid-ul-fitr reunion in the Embassy – below]

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@bangladesh.org or mzulqarnain@gmail.com

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