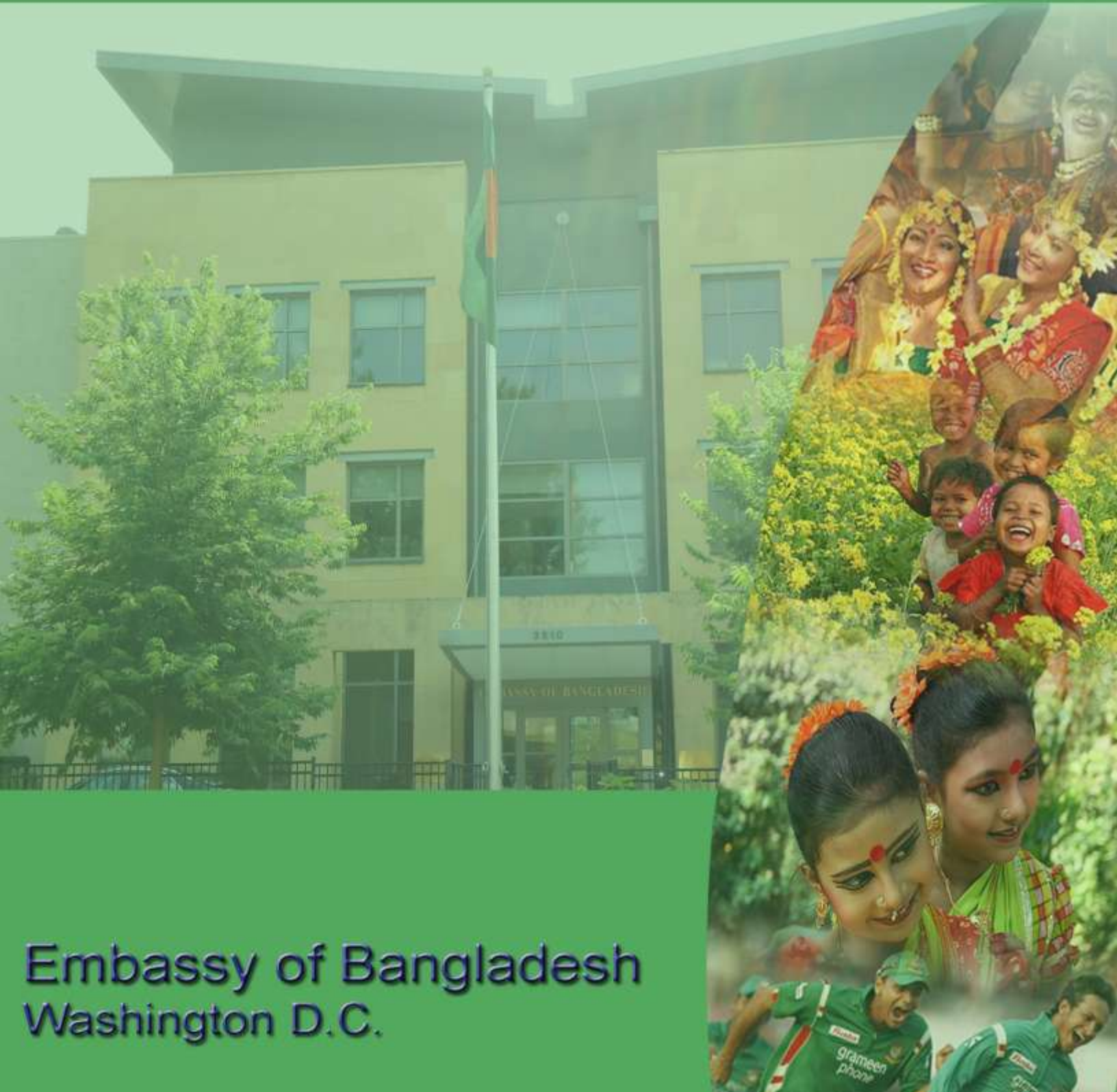


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POLITICAL AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Prime Minister attends the Commonwealth Summit



Hon. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina led a 55-member delegation to Perth, Australia, for attending the Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) from October 28-30, 2011. On October 28, the Hon. Prime Minister attended two executive sessions of the

CHOGM. The Bangladesh Prime Minister attended the biennial summit and discussed with her counterparts important issues such as global resilience amid uncertain economic conditions, climate change, human rights, economic and social development, food and energy security, etc. On the sidelines of the conference, the Hon. Prime Minister held meetings with her Singapore counterpart, the president of Sri Lanka and the foreign minister of Australia. The Commonwealth is a coalition of 54 independent countries committed to promoting democracy, good governance, respect for human rights and equality, the rule of law and sustainable economic and social development.

The Bangladesh Prime Minister attended banquet dinner hosted by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II as well as a lunch hosted by Commonwealth Secretary General Kamallesh Sharma in honour of the participating heads of government. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also visited Karrakatta Cemetery and placed a floral wreath at the memorial of WAS Ouderland, the only foreign national who received the gallantry award "Bir Protik" from Bangladesh government for contribution to Bangladesh's liberation.

Hon. Foreign Minister's meeting with the US Secretary of State

Bangladesh's relation with the US is a multidimensional one and it has withstood the test of time. This was said by the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh Dr. Dipu Moni, MP at a meeting in Washington, DC with the US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Held

at the US Department of State the meeting featured wide-ranging issues of mutual interests in the spirit of further strengthening the relations both in depth and dimension.

The Foreign Minister mentioned to the Secretary of State that it was extremely important for Bangladesh to conduct the trial of the killers of the Father of the Nation Bangbandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members to end the culture of impunity that prevailed in the country for more than 34 years.



Dr Dipu Moni mentioned that out of six fugitives, A. M. Rashed Chowdhury had been living in the US. Referring to her recent letter sent to the Secretary of State, the Bangladesh Foreign Minister sought US cooperation for the repatriation of the self-confessed killer to help uphold justice. Secretary Clinton mentioned that the issue has been under the judicial process and assured her that the State Department will look into the matter.

Referring to the bilateral trade Dr. Dipu Moni urged the US side for duty free access for the Bangladeshi products to the US market. She said that excessive tariff is levied on Bangladeshi products, particularly the RMG to enter into US market and requested to rectify the situation. She also urged the US Secretary of State for according facilities to Bangladesh under the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) as Bangladesh is eminently qualified for it.

Welcoming the Bangladesh Foreign Minister the US Secretary of State underscored the

importance of US' relations with Bangladesh, which is a secular, Muslim majority democracy. She applauded the various initiatives taken by the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina including the interactions with the countries in the South Asia region particularly the initiative to address the outstanding issues with India. She assured the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh of cooperation in pursuing various development activities and of helping the democratically elected government of Bangladesh in fulfilling the pledges made to its people. Secretary Clinton expressed her satisfaction with the meetings the US Ambassador-at-large for War Crimes Stephen Rapp had with the Bangladesh authorities and hoped that the trial will be conducted in conformity with the international standard. She also assured of cooperation in trade related matters to Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh Foreign Minister extended an invitation to US Secretary of State to visit Bangladesh to which the Secretary of State responded positively by saying that she would like to visit Bangladesh next year. The Foreign Minister also extended, on behalf of the Honorable President and the Prime Minister, invitation for President Barack Obama to visit Bangladesh. The 45-minute long meeting was held in a warm and cordial atmosphere. The US Secretary of State was assisted among others by Assistant Secretary for Central and South Asia Ambassador Robert Blake. The Bangladesh delegation included Bangladesh Ambassador to USA Akramul Qader.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

More organized tax laws on cards

The government will pass a new law on value-added tax soon after reviewing the tax laws of the developed countries, National Board of Revenue high officials told in a meeting with the leaders of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) on October 24, 2011. At the meeting the NBR chief said that the government

has been working on new tax laws since the passage of last budget in the Parliament. NBR officials expect that the new tax laws would be more organized and the implementation mechanism will be more smooth.

The NBR officials noted that with assistance from different multilateral organizations and development assistance partners, projects are underway for modernizing tax administration.

Banks speed up CSR efforts

Banks' spending for social and welfare causes increased in a staggering pace last year. Together they doled out Tk 233 crore on corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative in 2010, up by 425 percent against Tk 55 crore in 2009, said a report launched on October 12, 2011. At the review of CSR initiatives in banks at the central bank office, the Bangladesh Bank Governor

termed it commendable that the CSR activities have gained momentum in the past two years.

Urging the banks to build skill development centres under their CSR efforts, the BB Governor said, this year all banks have agreed to lend Tk 191 crore for production of spices at 4 percent interest rate and the central bank would refinance 6 percent interests to banks as subsidies. He also urged the banks to invest more on green energy.

BUSINESS, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Online access to Chittagong Port

BENEFITS TO COME

- Turn around time to come down by a day
- Users to get information on arrival and departure of containers and vessels online
- Users to submit and receive documents and pay bills online

The Chittagong Seaport did welcome a new chapter in operation as Chittagong Port Authority started the computerized container terminal management system on a trial basis from October 10, 2011.

Both officials and users say the move will ultimately cut turn around time from three days to two days and the port activities will be organized in a coordinated way, which will increase the efficiency and capacity of the port.

Once the new system is implemented, port users,

especially importers and exporters, will be able to get information on the arrival and departure of containers and vessels, sitting in front of their computers.

The CTMS would initially be introduced in four jetties, including two of the Chittagong Container Terminals and two others under the New Mooring Container Terminals to streamline operations. Around 40 percent of export containers would be handled with the new system, while the rest will with the old system. However, handling of exportable garment containers would be left out of the new system.

Once the new system is implemented, port users will also be able to submit and receive documents and pay bills online. The project will boost the capacity and efficiency of the Chittagong Port, said CPA Chairman. The system will automatically monitor the entire container delivery process, including arrival, unloading, shifting to the yard, stacking, tracking and delivery.

Steps to boost furniture exports



The government plans to cut duties on imports of raw materials for furniture to increase exports. Hon. Commerce Minister Col (Retd.) Faruk Khan ,MP told this on October 6, 2011 while inaugurating the “10th National Furniture

Fair 2011” at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka. The Minister said that furniture has an international market of \$50 billion, and Bangladesh has good potential in the sector because of enough manpower.

"Bangladesh exported furniture worth \$21 million last year and expects to take the export figure up to \$25 million by this year. “We can also showcase our heritage to the next generation and the international market as most of the designs of furniture came form our heritage,” said the Hon. Commerce Minister.

Eighty two local and international companies are participating in the six-day fair.

Leaders of Bangladesh Furniture Industry Owners Association noted that export rules must be developed for the furniture sector which will create jobs for 50 lakh people.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

ECNEC approves project to acquire land for Dhaka Expressway

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) approved a Tk 3,216 crore support project of the Dhaka Elevated

Expressway to acquire land and rehabilitate people displaced by the land acquisition. The ECNEC meeting of October 18, 2011, chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, decided that a total of 129.96 acres land will be acquired for the 26-kilometre long four-lane elevated expressway and compensation will be disbursed among the affected people.

At the same meeting it was decided that with a view to making the capital's east-west road network free of traffic congestion and connecting it with the Eastern Bypass a revised project of Tk 422-crore will be completed by

June, 2013. A six-km road from Pragati Sarani intersection (East-end point of Madani Avenue) to Balu River will be constructed under the project.

DIGITAL BANGLADESH

E-service in Jessore DC office



Now people in Jessore don't need to look for a designated official to get a service and spend time in the DC office to get the job done. All they have to do is to ask for the desired service at the slick e-centre on the office's ground floor. Once an application is submitted, it is forwarded to the official concerned through a computer network. "The applications are filed in paper.

Then they are scanned into the computer and forwarded to the designated official, "told the deputy commissioner of Jessore.

Not just applications, all official documents are now scanned and converted into computer files, he said, a copy of every computer file is sent to the inbox of the designated official. All unresolved files are marked as "unopened mails". A simple and attractive interface, with a convenient list of commands allows the officials to take necessary course of action. It used to take days or even weeks to do the same task, he said. The system has been through test run for months under a pilot project launched in September last year with technical assistance from the Access-to-Information (A2I) programme at the Prime Minister's Office.

The system is now working well. A2I officials said the e-service successfully running in Jessore DC office is being replicated in 31 other districts. They said one-stop e-centres will be launched in all 64 DC offices by November 2011.

The service will soon be available in 4,501 Union Information and Services Centres in union parishad offices across the country. Apart from

saving hundreds of reams of paper, it will speed up the decision-making process.

CULTURE, HERITAGE & TOURISM

Hon. Prime Minister unveils Biman's new Boeing aircraft



Hon. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina unveiled a new Boeing aircraft for Biman at Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka on October 26, 2011. The delivery of the Boeing 777-300ER aircraft is part of a \$1.2 billion sales agreement that Biman Bangladesh Airlines signed with the world's leading plane maker Boeing in 2008 for 10 aircraft deliveries between 2011 and 2019.

The Hon. Prime Minister unveiled the \$152 million aircraft that can fly up to 16 hours at a

stretch, which make it economically viable for long-haul routes. A second 777-300ER is pending to be delivered on November 22 and two more deliveries are planned for 2013.

Addressing a press conference at Balaka, Biman's head office, Biman high officials said the airline will start long-haul flights soon to London, Manchester, Rome, Milan and Jeddah.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

US food security assistance

United States Agency for International Development (USAID) will help Bangladesh implement its food security investment plan. The Agency will provide assistance for agricultural research, an important component of the food security plan, said a US delegation as it called on the Hon. Minister for food and disaster management Minister Mr. Abdur

Razzaque at his ministry office on October 26, 2011.

During the meeting, the food minister said the government is mobilising funds from its own budget but could not implement the plan fully as responses from the development partners were little. Bangladesh wants to ensure its food security and nutrition through the investment plan, which was lauded in the international arena, he said, asking the USAID to lead the other development partners for assistance.

D-8 Ministerial Bangladesh for joint 'green energy' fund

Hon. Industries Minister Dilip Barua has proposed to set up a joint investment fund for improving green energy initiative within the member countries of the D-8.

At the concluding session of the three-day second D-8 Ministerial meeting on Industry in Istanbul on October 6, 2011 the Hon. Industries Minister said that such a fund will help enhance intra D-8 trade and investment and address the adverse effects of global climate change.

Turkey's Minister for Science, Industry and Technology Nihat Ergun and ministers, ambassadors, delegates and senior officials of member countries were present at the meeting.

The Hon. Industries Minister urged his fellow ministers to motivate their entrepreneurs to invest in the emerging industrial sector of Bangladesh such as : Shipbuilding, IT Industry, Pharmaceutical, Jute & Jute products, Agro-based industries, Electrics and Electronics, Automobiles, Fertilizer, Furniture and SMEs.

At the D-8 Summit, Bangladesh proposed for creating a fully operational D-8 Food Fund for ensuring food security among the member countries . The Bangladesh Minister suggested that D-8 member countries can cooperate and help each other in terms of technology transfer, capacity building, development of alternative fuels, including renewable sources of energy, sharing experience and technical know-how through training, exchange of bilateral or

multilateral experts and delegation for collective industrial development.

\$180m dev assistance from the USA

The US government will provide over US \$180 million to Bangladesh as development assistance this year, an increase of over US \$20 million from last year. US Chargé d'Affaires Nicholas Dean and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission Director to Bangladesh Richard Greene announced the commitment through a press release of the American Centre in Dhaka on October 2, 2011.

Of the assistance through USAID, approximately \$13 million is allotted for democracy and governance while \$45 million for food security, \$61 million for population, health, and nutrition programmes and \$17 million for climate change and environment programmes.

Of the US assistance, \$42 million will go for basic humanitarian assistance, improve availability of food, increase purchasing power of poor people, improve disaster readiness and provide basic health and nutrition services to highly vulnerable people. USAID will also help Bangladesh government to expand its clean energy programmes.

EMBASSY NEWS

October 12, 2011: Hon. Foreign Minister formally inaugurates the MRP/MRV facility at the Embassy.

While inaugurating MRP/MRV facilities at the Embassy, the Hon. Foreign Minister said that this is in fulfillment of the present government's pre-election commitment to turn Bangladesh into a *Digital Bangladesh* by the year 2021. She expressed her optimism that from now on the Bangladesh expatriates in different countries would receive various consular services in the

most expeditious fashion. The Hon. Foreign Minister walked around the consular section of the Embassy to see for herself how the officials are rendering their jobs. After inaugurating the facility she briefly addressed the Embassy officials and members of Bangladesh community who were present on the occasion. The Hon. Foreign Minister listened to the community members and responded to their various queries. Bangladesh Ambassador to the USA and State Minister Mr. Akramul Qader also spoke on the occasion and responded to various questions.

PHOTO GALLERY



Hon. Foreign Minister formally inaugurates the MRP/MRV at the Embassy and exchanges opinion with Embassy officials and members of Bangladesh community



Hon. Foreign Minister being interviewed by journalists

News source:

Different daily and weekly newspapers published from Bangladesh