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Stockholm

The Colours of Bangladesh

Kaleidoscope

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- Photo: Power by Shahabuddin Ahmed

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First Word

I am happy that the present issue of Kaleidoscope is covering two days of the greatest national significance of Bangladesh-the Martyrs' Day as well as the International Mother Tongue Day of 21 February and the Independence and National Day of Bangladesh of 26 March, latter marking its auspicious 40th anniversary. It is therefore, pertinent to bring to the information of the political, economic, business, academic, tourism and cultural communities in Bangladesh and Sweden some special write ups along with the usual items of news and events that are carried in the Kaleidoscope. It is also a pleasure to introduce some space for Bangladesh expatriates and student community here in Kaleidoscope.

As may be seen from the issue, Bangladesh is in the right track and experiencing positive trends in the sectors of growth and development. Stability, peace and democratic process continue; trade, investment, and market expansion is going on at admirable pace; life in Bangladesh is vibrating in a healthy way in educational and cultural arena with a lot of positive stories to tell while we are happy to note Bangladesh's bilateral relations expanding in new areas with Sweden and four other Nordic countries.

A.F.M. Gousal Azam Sarker
Ambassador & Chief Editor

Editor's Note

This is great pleasure for me to convey to you in this single issue of Kaleidoscope greetings of the Independence and National Day, the Martyrs' Day and International Mother Language Day, and the warm and colourful spring of Bangladesh. Although we have added a number of articles on these national occasions, we have not left out our usual news coverage and other features.

Apart from the news on those visits and the interesting and encouraging news on development and business issues, we have again added an article on the Sundarbans - the nature's marvel - for our nature loving readers. This 'Venice of Nature' being one of the finalists of the world's New7Wonders of Nature campaign, we hope you will be tantalized to cast your vote for this crown jewel of the beautiful Bangladesh.

During past couple of months our Hon'ble Prime Minister went on two important visits - bilateral visit to the UK, and visit to UAE to attend World Future Energy Summit. Hon'ble Foreign Minister as well took on important official tours to Bhutan, Canada, and Myanmar. Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan came to Bangladesh on an official visit during this period.

Khandker Masudul Alam
First Secretary

Hon'ble Prime Minister visits UK and UAE

Visit to UK: The Hon'ble Prime Minister H.E. Sheikh Hasina paid an official visit to the United Kingdom (UK) On 25-31 January 2011. In her official talks with her British counterpart H.E. Mr. David Cameron on January 27, the two leaders discussed various issues of bilateral interest. Mr. Cameron praised the socio-economic programmes of Bangladesh Government and Bangladesh's leadership role in climate change negotiations and assured of the UK's continued support to the economic development of Bangladesh and Bangladesh's climate change adaptation. Among other programmes, H.E. Sheikh Hasina also addressed the Oxford Union Society on 'World Peace' and joined a programme at



H.E. Sheikh Hasina with H.E. David Cameron

the House of Commons on 27 January 2011. She was conferred the Global Diversity Award for her priceless contribution to a number of crucial areas of public private sectors to promote human life. Speaker of the British Parliament Mr. John Bercow handed over the award in London on 26 January 2011.

Visit to UAE: The Hon'ble Prime Minister H.E. Sheikh Hasina visited Abu Dhabi on 17 January 2011 to attend the World Future Energy Summit (WFES) 2011 where she delivered her keynote speech. 'We all have to work together for carbon-free nations, following the path of Abu Dhabi, to achieve a carbon-free world,' Hon'ble Prime Minister said while addressing WFES. She expressed determination of her government to continue its efforts to keep green house gas (GHG) emissions at a minimum and reach the status of carbon-free nation in the near future. Bangladesh is adopting clean energy policy and



H.E. Sheikh Hasina with Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed

already four million homes have been installed with solar power system, she informed. 'We are, however, realistic regarding the sources of energy needed for development' the Hon'ble Prime Minister further added.

During the visit Hon'ble Prime Minister had bilateral talks with her UAE counterpart H.E. Sheikh Mohamed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum. The two leaders discussed a wide range of issues offering scope for cooperation. During the meeting, she requested the UAE government, as well as its private sector, to invest in potential sectors in Bangladesh including shipbuilding, gas-exploration and power generation. The two leaders also discussed the issue of exporting manpower from Bangladesh to the oil-rich country.

In the sidelines of the main event, UAE Labour Minister HE Mr. Saqr-Ghobash, UN Secretary General HE Mr. Ban Ki-moon met with the Hon'ble Prime Minister. She also had a meeting with Pakistan President HE Mr. Asif Ali Zardari. During the meeting, Mr. Ban Ki-moon highly praised Bangladesh's progress towards attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). He also praised the government's efforts at facing the adverse impacts of climate change, and the contribution of Bangladeshi contingents in UN peacekeeping missions across the globe. ■

Foreign Minister visits Bhutan

The Hon'ble Foreign Minister H.E. Dr. Dipu Moni, MP paid an official visit to Bhutan for attending 33rd session of the SAARC Council of Ministers. She was also received in audience by the King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk on 09 February 2011

when the King expressed intention of his country to further strengthen bilateral relations with Bangladesh, strengthen democratic institutions, and establish greater cooperation among the South Asian nations. ■

Foreign Minister's first bilateral visit to Canada

The Hon. Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni, MP paid her first bilateral visit to Canada from 13 to 17 February 2011 at the invitation from Canadian counterpart Mr. Lawrence Cannon. This was the first visit by a Bangladesh Foreign Minister to Canada after 1999 which had coincided with the 39th anniversary of the Canada's recognition to independent Bangladesh coming on 14 February 1972. During their meeting, the two Foreign Ministers recognized the shared values of democracy, Rule of Law and freedom that have bonded the two countries so strongly and that allowed them to forge close cooperation in the

areas of trade, socio-economic development, human rights, international peace and security and so on. They expressed satisfaction at the increase of trade between the two countries and agreed to explore signing of Memoranda of Understanding on educational and agricultural cooperation. Bangladesh Foreign Minister mentioned that her country might benefit from such agreements in the areas of human capacity building, agricultural research and increased Canadian Foreign Direct Investment in Bangladesh particularly in the areas of power and energy. ■

Bangladesh and Myanmar agree on direct connectivity

Bangladesh and Myanmar reiterated their commitment to establishing physical connectivity when Bangladesh Foreign Minister H.E. Dr. Dipu Moni, MP, who was on a visit to Myanmar to attend the 13th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting, met with her Myanmar counterpart H.E. Mr. U Nyan Win in Nay Pyi Taw on 20 January 2011. Bangladesh Foreign Minister emphasized that, as close neighbors, the two countries needed to have direct road, shipping, and railway connectivity. The two Foreign Ministers also agreed to establish direct air links at an early date. To this end, they agreed to make necessary amendments to the existing Air Services Agreement.

They took note of the progress on the maritime delimitation between Myanmar and Bangladesh. Foreign Minister stressed the need for concluding

the repatriation of the Myanmar refugees from Bangladesh. However, she noted with happiness that a power purchase agreement, involving the private sectors of the two countries, for import of electricity from Myanmar was under process. She also noted the progress in bilateral trade which was steadily increasing.

The 13th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting had focus on enhanced collaboration on people-to-people contact, culture, security issues, connectivity, tourism, energy, technologies, fisheries, poverty alleviation, agriculture, environment, disaster management, public health and climate change. The meeting also finalized the recommendations related to Permanent Secretariat. It was decided that the permanent secretariat of the BIMSTEC would be established in Dhaka, Bangladesh. ■

Our freedom struggle: An aesthetic celebration

"JAI Bangla! Jai Bangla!" From the banks of the great Ganges and the broad Brahmaputra, from the emerald rice fields and mustard-colored hills of the countryside, from the countless squares of countless villages came the cry. "Victory to Bengal! Victory to Bengal!" They danced on the roofs of buses and marched down city streets singing their anthem Golden Bengal. They brought the green, red and gold banner of Bengal out of secret hiding places to flutter freely from buildings, while huge pictures of their imprisoned leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, sprang up overnight on trucks, houses and signposts.

This is how the Time (**Bangladesh: Out of War, a Nation Is Born**, TIME, Dec. 20, 1971) records the quintessential moment of delivery of a nation in freedom, patriotism and dignity. The 16th of December, 1971 – a day that we have marked since then as the Victory Day - has the making of an epic. It encapsulates in that moment of euphoria the long and arduous struggle of the Bengalee people and the shaping of sovereign Bangladesh - the first Bengali republic.

It all began with the assertion of a national identity in the face of systematic denial, discrimination and deprivation – an identity rooted in a millennia-old heritage of language, culture and customs. It evolved through the shaping of political demands for inclusion and equal access to opportunities, against marginalisation of the Bengalee people and their cultural essence, the resistance against martial law and military dictatorship, and a consistent aspiration for democratic rights under a constitutional government. It crystallized into the 6-points, a detailed manifesto for autonomy and devolution. Then came the first ever general elections in the then Pakistan, and landslide victory for the Awami League and the 6-points – the prospect of Bengalee-led majority in government. And then, in the face of the Pakistani authorities refusal to hand over power, came the non-co-operation movement culminating in the declaration of independence by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The inexorable train set in motion by these events came to an end with the surrender of Pakistani forces in occupation of Bangladesh. Between the 7th of March and the 16th of December, there was first

the unrelenting resolve of the Bengalee people, the unwarranted and ruthless crackdown of the Pakistan military, the unleashing of a genocide that took 3 million lives, the spontaneous resistance, the valour and the sacrifice, the formation of the government in exile, the organisation of the armed offensive against the Pakistani forces as well as diplomatic initiatives to create support for the Bangladesh cause. On 7th March 1971 came Bangabandhu's clarion call for freedom, on 26th March 1971, his impassioned declaration of independence, and on 16th December 1971, our victory - the occupation ended, and the nightmare ended. With victory, even as the nation rejoiced and celebrated, many did not return home from the battle-field. Even in our collective joy, there were among us those that mourned near and dear ones who were never to return.

An epic traces the birth of a nation. It is filled to the brim with stories of valour and sacrifice. At the centre of the story-line is a war, and the end comes with the protagonists prevailing over adversaries. Throughout the war, however, each day is dogged by uncertainties, and the end doubly so. Remember Abhimanyu's tragic end in the Battle of Kurukshetra? No one emerges unscathed from battle. An epic, therefore, is as much about achievement, about dreams and the courage to pursue such dreams, as it is about private griefs, despair and desolation. The Bangladesh story, our epic war, in all its glory and the tragedies that made it possible is indeed such a case in point.

It was high poetry that a people rose in unison, challenged and humbled the might of an occupying regular army nearly 100,000 strong. It is again the stuff of poetry that an all-out war was waged in the name of a man, who was interned in enemy hands. It was the common man that set up barricades and died as early as 3rd March 1971. The vanity of the "invincible" Pakistan Army was shattered in the course of the War, not by a regular army but by peasants, workers, students, political activists and even the idlers who ►►

► turned freedom fighter – all singing “*Amar shonar Bangla, ami toma-e bhalobash?*” as they went to battle. This is an epic that reminds us that, our infatuation with plaintive folk tunes and Tagore notwithstanding, we can take up arms and make a difference. In fact, the military credentials of Bengalees are quite strong. The 1857 uprising against the British Raj started from Bengal. Today’s Bahadur Shah Park in old Dhaka bears testimony to the British vengeance against the Bengalee “rebels”. It was a consequence of the “mutiny” that Bengalees, among others, were sidelined from the British forces, and myths were created of martial (read loyal) and non-martial (read independent minded) races in India. History also records Titu Mir’s resistance, Masterda Surya Sen’s attack on the Chittagong Armoury. Indeed, it was another Bengalee, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, who formed the Azad Hind forces to drive out the British. The martial dimension of the Bengalees was raised to the level of an art form by Guru Shodoy Dutta in the *Brotochari nritto*. (the dance of the avowed)

What would be the most memorable lines of this unwritten epic? One can of course begin far back in antiquity from the Charyapada, or perhaps the brilliant outpouring of homilies to mother Bengal at the beginning of the 20th Century (notably Tagore, DL Roy, Rajanikanta and later, Nazrul Islam), or closer to contemporary history, the dirge that has become the immortal anthem for the 21st of February. I would choose however, to limit the search to the immediate contiguity of the battle proper. The first lines I choose are from 7th March, when Bangabandhu gave expression to our collective aspiration: “*ebarer shongram muktir shongram, ebarer shongram shadbinotar shongram*” (the struggle now is the struggle for freedom; the struggle now is the struggle for independence). The second quote from this “organic” epic, if so it may be called, would be from the Proclamation of Independence (10 April, 1971):

“*...Banga Bandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the undisputed leader of 75 million people of Bangladesh, in due fulfillment of the legitimate right of self-determination of the people of Bangladesh, made a declaration of independence in Dacca on March 26, 1971, and urged the people of Bangladesh to defend the honour and integrity of Bangladesh...*”

“*We, the elected representatives of the people of Bangladesh...constituted ourselves into a Constituent Assembly,*

and... in order to ensure for the people of Bangladesh equality, human dignity and social justice, declare and constitute Bangladesh to be a sovereign People’s Republic...”

The third and final quote would be from the instrument of surrender of 16 December 1971:

“*The PAKISTAN Eastern Command agree to surrender all PAKISTAN Armed Forces in BANGLA DESH to Lieutenant-General JAGJIT SINGH AURORA, General Officer Commanding in Chief of the Indian and Bangladesh forces in the Eastern Theatre. This surrender includes all PAKISTAN land, air and naval forces as also all paramilitary forces and civil armed forces.*”

Read with these quotes, I would choose for effects, lines from Sikandar Abu Zafar’s emotive poem, *Bangla Chharo*, that so astutely caught the pulse of a nation that had drawn the battle lines:

“*Tumi amar jolosthol-er madur theke namo
Tumi Bangla chharo!!*”

(Step off this carpet of my land and my waters,
You! Quit Bengal, or else!!)

But before that, what of “the face that launched a thousand ships?” Jibonando Das celebrates the haunting beauty of Bengal (I have seen the face of Bengal) - verily the face that launched millions into the fight for freedom.

How can we not have Shamsur Rahman’s famous lines that evoke Sisyphean images in our search for freedom: “*Tomake pao-ar jonne, hey shadbinota*

*Tomake pao-ar jonne
Ar kotobar bhashte hobe roktogonga-e?
Ar kotobar dekhte hobe khandob dabo?”*

(For you, o freedom,

For you,

How much more need we drench in rivers of blood?

How many times more need we watch the Khanda forests burn?)

And then there are the cathartic melodies of Bhupen Hazarika when it all ended in triumph: “*Joy joy nobojato Bangladesh, joy joy mukti babin?*” (triumphal salutations to newly born Bangladesh; triumphal salutations to the freedom fighters).

Speaking of catharsis, one can conceive of the birth ►►

► of Bangladesh as a trilogy of tragedies in the classical tradition of Attica. The first of the three plays would cover the evolution of the movement for autonomy into the struggle for independence and emergence of the public persona of Bangabandhu at its height; the second would be about the genocide, the resistance and the Mujibnagar Government's successful conduct of the war and diplomacy; and the third would be about the victory, 16th December and the return of Bangabandhu to Bangladesh. The trilogy would not end with 16th December, because our proximity to the pathos generated by the war, even in victory had not sublimated. Formal victory ended the war, but did not erase the scars. That had to wait for another 25 days, when Bangabandhu returned and at the same race course from where he had created history on 7th March, he wept with the unending procession of people that thronged to see him. There was sublimation in those tears; the public outburst of private grief provided for the nation the much needed catharsis.

Yet another storyline can be developed, in tragic vein about the 16th of December itself – the day that brought our liberation. Bangabandhu, whose persona subsumes our freedom struggle, returned home unscathed from the Pakistani prison and charges of treason. Tragic that his precious life ended in independent Bangladesh in the hands of some rogue elements in the Bangladesh Army. Such also was the end for those who led us through the war – Acting President Syed Nazrul Islam, Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmed and Ministers Mansoor Ali and Qamruzzaman. At least three sector Commanders of the Liberation War (two of them Force Commanders also) – Zia-ur-Rahman, Khaled Mosharraf and Manzur – died not by the enemy's bullet in the War, but by their compatriot's, and within ten years of the War. Tragedy again that Bangabandhu, whose name inspired, and Tajuddin, whose labour shaped the course and outcome of the War, flew the national flag on their official transport for between two and three and a half years; and some who stood publicly against the independence movement, and indeed orchestrated the genocide, have flown the flag for more than five years. The dénouement of this tragedy can perhaps be penned now, now that a consensus has emerged and for bringing those guilty of war crimes to book.

The trilogy and the later tragedy can also be brilliantly

told in cinematic language, with the digital technology now at our command. Imagine the tools and the creativity born of collaboration essential to the cinematic narrative. We can begin and end with 16th December 1971, with flash backs, mis en scenes, and creative camera work – the total effect in light and sound as only a film can offer.

Poetry and the arts are again about symbolisms. On 16th December, 1971, the city of Dhaka was decked in the red, green and gold flag of Bangladesh. The crescent moon and star etched Pakistani flag came down for good. Indeed, the flag of independent Bangladesh predates independence. It was formally hoisted by then student leader ASM Abdur Rab on 3 March and handed over to Bangabandhu. On 23 March, 1971, Pakistan's National Day, at the height of the non-cooperation movement, the Pakistan flag flew only atop the Governor's House and in Dhaka Cantonment. Its place was taken by the yet unborn Bangladesh's flag and black flags of protest. Symbolism again that the instrument of surrender was signed at the same place from where 9 months and 9 days before, Bangabandhu gave the call for freedom.

Who has not seen the masterful sketch of General Yahya Khan as a blood-thirsty demon by Qamrul Hasan? His image is immortalized in notoriety like the demon Mahisasura, who in his death throes at the feet of the goddess Durga is part and parcel of the devi's repertoire. Symbolisms go back to the elections – to the Awami League's boat invoking the extended Bengali legacy (*Hoq-Bhashanir nouka*) from the 1954 elections when the United Front routed the Muslim League in the then East Pakistan. The Bengali alphabets became vested with powerful symbolism as also folk motifs. The posters, emblazoned with linear images of mosques, Hindu and Buddhist temples, and churches side by side pronounced an inclusive message: We are all Bengalis – the Muslims, the Hindus, the Buddhists and the Christians of Bengal. Then came the bank notes, the postage stamps. And most potent, the battle-cry of our War of Liberation – *Joy Bangla!* against their *Pakistan Zindabad*.

This then prompts us to read the aesthetics of the War of Liberation in musical terms. We can conceive of a written Western classical piece – a symphony perhaps. ►

▶ The chords are struck as the conductor waves his wand – Bangabandhu on 7th March. And the symphony proceeds – a brilliant orchestration of strings, winds, percussions etc., sometimes strong, sometimes faint, sometimes welling up from deep within. All this imitating the fortunes of the war as they unfold March to December 1971. It all reaches a crescendo on 16 December. And then, the conductor takes a bow, on his return to independent Bangladesh on 10 January 1972. Alternatively, we conceive a *dhun* in *tritaal* or *bilambit ektaal*, perhaps in *raga basant* (as a tribute to the youthful vigour of the freedom fighters) or some other as you will. It begins with a rambling *alaap* signifying the beginning of the crackdown, the initial trauma. The melody takes shape as the Mujibnagar Government is formed following the formal Proclamation of Independence. With every turn in the war, there are musical embellishments as only the finest tradition of *Raaga* music can. As we approach the 16th of December, the climax approaches in perhaps a *jugal bandi* of string and percussion.

Reduced to the minimum, 16th December 1971 is the day that the Pakistan forces in Bangladesh signed the instrument of surrender and laid down their arms. What does this surrender mean? We must bear in mind that the instrument was a military document, not a political instrument in the strictest sense, although it had political implications and obligations. Despite the fact that Pakistan did not recognise Bangladesh until much later, in the instrument, the Pakistani General identifies his forces as “all PAKISTAN Armed Forces in BANGLA DESH”, and he surrenders his command to the GOC in Chief of the “Indian and Bangladesh forces in the Eastern Theatre”. For the winning side, the signatory is Lt. Gen. Aurora of the Indian Army. The instrument however, does not invoke his Indian army hat or have any unilateral reference to the Indian command. It was not the Pakistan Army surrendering to the Indian Army, but the Eastern Command of the Pakistan Army surrendering to the joint Command of the Indian and Bangladesh forces in the Eastern Theatre. This was the end of the occupation of Bangladesh by Pakistani forces. Was this the end of beligerence? of the unilateral war imposed by Pakistan on Bangladesh referred to in the Proclamation of Independence? No, because Pakistan kept on claiming Bangladesh to be part of its territory and blocking Bangladesh’s entry into the UN. It took another two years plus before Pakistan re-

lented and found it expeditious to recognise the independence of Bangladesh in February 1974. In doing so, it withdrew its non-existent territorial claims on Bangladesh and in effect redefined its own territorial limits. Bangladesh’s Liberation War therefore, in effect created two new states – sovereign liberated Bangladesh and the new, albeit truncated Pakistan. That is why the recognition, when it came, was not unilateral but mutual. One thing perhaps needs to be made amply clear. 16 December 1971 permanently ended all organic links of the 75 million people of the former East Pakistan with the territorially redefined state of Pakistan. Bangladesh is the outcome of ethos and aspirations antithetical to Pakistan’s. It was not a seceding territory running its affairs post independence on business as usual basis. The birth of Bangladesh is baptised in blood and fire, it was an active choice against all that the then Pakistan represented. Bangladesh’s journey as a sovereign independent state, which began on 26th March 1971, became unimpeded with the end of occupation on 16 December. As we pay tribute to the freedom fighters who made it all possible, I am reminded of Tagore and his quintessential poetry that made us dream, and dream big:

*“Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow
domestic walls;
.....
Into that heaven of freedom, my father, let my country awake.”* ■

Mijarul Quayes
Foreign Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dhaka



This is a painting of an 18 year old Bangladeshi girl named Nadi Islam who has been born and brought up in Sweden. Here Nadi tried to reflect the struggle of Bangladesh people for freedom and independence.

Digital Bangladesh

The Bengalee nation had a dream, which was shown by the greatest Bengalee of all times - the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. We achieved our

independence through a war of liberation after a long stretch of movements and struggle in order to realize that dream. Half of that dream has now



► materialised, but our struggle for freedom or economic emancipation is yet to be crowned with success. The dream of a Golden Bangla is yet to be attained. Bangabandhu's daughter and leader of the masses Sheikh Hasina had declared a pledge to build a Digital Bangladesh based on 'Vision-2021' in the election manifesto of 2008, keeping in mind her father's dream. The main idea of a Digital Bangladesh is to groom the nation as a knowledge-based middle-income country by the year 2021 through utilisation of technologies. It aspires for a poverty and hunger-free Bangladesh through overall uplift of the living standard of Bangla's inhabitants. The present government has worked relentlessly during the past two years for achieving that objective. It is a matter of satisfaction that the use of technology, especially that of information technology, has increased substantially due to the involvement of the masses in sincere endeavours of the government. People have realized that positive changes were taking place in their lives due to application of technology. I consider it to be a huge success of the government. The government has succeeded in creating a space of confidence among the citizenry.

The development vision of Sheikh Hasina has striven to bring backward segments of the country's population to the mainstream by offering them additional assistance. In order to materialise that, our objective has been to build a Digital Bangladesh by involving all citizens of the country. Technology is considered/A path for progress/Digital Bangladesh/Will be for all our masses.

We feel more encouraged when we hear from the IT technologists of the present generation: "Digital Bangladesh is not a distant world. It is our own world. It is merely a guarantee for becoming more developed, speedier and acquiring more sensitive technology at affordable prices. Again, it also implies different worlds for different individuals. For a student, it is an assurance for obtaining high quality education. For a farmer, it is a guarantee for a market for the crops he produces. For a sick man, it is a guarantee for getting good treatment, freedom from standing in the queue day after day. For a government employee, it is the best medium for communication and evaluation of his work. For a pensioner, a freedom fighter and a widow, it is a guarantee for obtaining safety allowances and pensions with transparency. The main theme in the philosophy of Digital Bangladesh is to ensure the empowerment of people through optimum utilisation of technology, establishment of good governance and above all to meet the needs of all citizens at their doorsteps. Digital Bangladesh will be implemented for the welfare of all citizens irrespective of their wealth or status."

The ICT Policy was adopted in April soon after formation

of the present government. A total of 306 action plans were taken up in its main programme for implementation. The policy has fixed immediate steps, medium-term measures and long-term actions for all ministries. As a result, all bodies of the government are getting ready for e-governance. The Ministry of Science and Information & Communication Technology is coordinating the whole endeavour.

Many of you have witnessed the digital innovation fair held at Bangabandhu Novo-theatre earlier this year. Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had inaugurated the fair. Local and foreign policy-makers, experts and officials from over hundred organizations were present at the inauguration. Explaining the significance of digital Bangladesh, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had said then, "It implied paying bills through mobile phones, buying railway tickets from home, getting healthcare from upazila level doctors while staying in the village." She further said that we had made a pledge before the election to build a digital Bangladesh. We have chosen information technology as a tool to fulfil that commitment. We seek to ensure transparency, accountability and good governance at all layers of administration. Those who are working and providing leadership to the administrative and service sectors of the government have to think anew. They will have to find out how services can be ensured for the country's 150 million people. We do not want the people to move from door to door of administration for services; rather, we want services to reach the doorsteps of the citizens. We have for the first time succeeded in presenting our good intentions before the people. You have noticed, that even the secretaries of ministries were now telling the people what they would do for the common man during the coming year. These are big changes. We also witnessed during the digital fair that a canopy of honest competition has been put in place among the concerned ministries in this area.

Many things can be said about our successes in information technology during the past two years. These include getting exam results through SMS and registering for university admission from home. Mention can also be made about the delivery orders received by sugarcane growers through mobile SMS. If I say in a simple language, then it would sound something like this:

To register or to get result/ Please send SMS/It saves time and expense/ The country is changing. At mill-gates the sugarcane growers/ No more need to stand in queues/It saves time and expense/The country is changing. Tenders are also online/Various tickets and bills/Saves so many hassles/Difficulties will soon vanish. ►►

► I have a firm conviction that people's interest in technology, especially information technology, has increased because of these developments. As a consequence, the number of mobile-phone users has increased by over 20 million during the past two years. And at governmental level, we were also inspired to establish 4,501 union information service centres throughout the country. Even unions without electricity supply have not been left out. Besides, information centres have also been set up at 125 upazilas and information portals were launched for 64 districts. We are optimistic that by the grace of Almighty, we shall succeed in building a digital Bangladesh as desired by Bangabandhu's daughter, before the year 2021. ■

Mr. Yeafesh Osman
Architect

(Translated by: Helal Uddin Ahmed)

Community News

Swedish-Bangla Dictionary published

One expatriate Bangladeshi named Ahmed H. Khan published a Swedish-Bangla dictionary (Svensk-Bengaliska Ordboken). The dictionary consists of more than 20000 words and appears to be a great contribution to bridge the language gap between Bangladesh and Sweden and would come handy for the Bangladeshi newcomers in Sweden.

Success and Potentiality of Export Trade of Bangladesh

Export Promotion Bureau has been executing its functions relentlessly to achieve equilibrium in the foreign trade and economic growth through continues development and promotion of the export trade of the country by sustaining in the rapid changing and stiff competitive global trade. Among those activities, the prominent activities are-expansion of production of exportable products, product diversification, inclusion of new products in the export basket, policy support in the development of export trade, collection, preservation & dissemination of trade information, compilation export data as well as export marketing development. Export market is being expanded rapidly due to timely initiative of Export Promotion Bureau. Export destination of Bangladesh was limited within 68 countries during 1972-73 FY, now it has been extended to 187 countries. With the robust leadership and strategic planning of Ministry of Commerce and Export Promotion Bureau export earning during 2009-2010 has been achieved amounted to US\$ 16204.65 million. The export growth has registered around 40% during July-January of FY 2010-2011. Export growth registered 4551% in 2009-2010 in comparison to 1972-73. Export Promotion Bureau is playing a great role in product diversification and product development. Exportable product during 1972-73 was 25, at present it has

been increased to 168 products. Though Bangladesh is exporting 168 products, but the major share of export earning is limited to only few products. Main players in the export earning are readymade garments, jute and jute products, frozen food, leather and leather goods, agricultural products and home textile. Among the exportable 80% export earning is being achieved by readymade garments sector.

As an initiative of export diversification, considering the export potentiality and production capacity, eight products such as 1) agro-products and agro-processing products; 2) light engineering products (including auto-parts and bicycles); 3) footwear and leather products; 4) pharmaceutical products 5) software and ICT products; 6) home textile; 7) the sea-bound ship building Industries; and 8) toiletries products have been identified as highest priority sector and 12 products such as 1) crushed and finished leather production; 2) frozen fish production and processing; 3) handicrafts products; 4) electric and electronic products; 5) fresh flower and foliage; 6) jute and jute products; 7) hand-woven textiles from hill areas (*pahari tant bostro*); 8) uncut diamond; and 9) producing herbal plants, medicine and medicinal products; 10) ceramic products and melamine; 11) plastic products; and 12) furniture ►►

► industries have been identified as special development sectors.

A fundamental report on “Export of Ship from Bangladesh: Problems and Prospects” has been prepared to make an action plan in order to develop the ship building sector. To implement the recommendation made in the said report, a standing committee headed by Vice-Chairman of EPB has been formulated. The committee has already prepared the strategic plan by reviewing the given advantages to this sector. It is hoped that if the recommendations are implemented then the ship building industry will be emerged as a promising sector in Bangladesh. It is worth mentioning that by exporting ship to European Union (EU) and Mozambique US \$ amounted to 25.29 million has been achieved during FY 2009-2010. Considering the potentiality of the furniture sector in the world market a fundamental document has been prepared to develop this sector and a national work plan has been formulated as a part of development planning as well. Export Promotion Bureau has undertaken initiative to conduct export promotional activities at the village level under One District One Product (ODOP) program. 14 products from 41 districts have been identified as an initiative of product development under this program. At the preliminary stage multifarious steps have been undertaken to develop agar wood & ator, clay tally and rubber under this said program.

It is worth mentioning that according to the statistics given by the International Trade Organization (ITC), most of the neighboring countries of Bangladesh experienced negative trend in their export during 2009-2010. But due to dynamic and efficient leadership of the present Government, the export growth of Bangladesh was positive during this period despite the global economic meltdown. While export growth of India (-2.81%), Bhutan (-5%), Pakistan (-13.44%), Sri-Lanka (-13.14%), Maldives (-38.89%), Indonesia (-14.97%), Malaysia (-20.95%) and Thailand (-13.25%) and adjoining countries was negative. During the current fiscal year of 2010-2011 export target has been fixed at US\$ 18,500.00 million. During July-December 2010 of current fiscal year 2010-2011 export earning has been achieved worth US\$ 10263.64 million, which is 41.00% more than the same period of the previous year. The idea of holding Dhaka International Trade Fair (DITF) originated with a view to give the local entrepreneurs the opportunity to see the various products being pro-

duced by their counterparts abroad. Ministry of Commerce and Export Promotion Bureau has been jointly organizing the DITF since 1995. Five hundred and thirty one companies including local and foreign countries participated in the DITF-2011. Export order amounted to Tk.25 crore have been achieved through DITF-2011.

With a view to facilitate export trade by creating direct contact between suppliers and exhibitors “Bangladesh-China Friendship Exhibition Centre” project has been taken under the financial support of Chinese Government. In the meantime the said project has been approved by the ECNEC on 09 December 2009. At present initiative has been taken to acquire alternative site for implementation of the project. Moreover, to accelerate the export promotional activities initiative has been undertaken to construct National Export House to Conduct the Export related activities from EPB’S own building. A Plot located in the E-5/B under Shere-Bangla-Nagar has been allotted in the favor of EPB to implement the said project.

To expand and to consolidate export market as well as to introduce our exportable in the overseas market, Export Promotion Bureau takes part in international fairs and organizes Single Country Trade Exhibitions in different countries. During the fiscal year-2009-2010 EPB participated in as many as 27 International Trade Fairs and organized 03 Single Country Trade Exhibitions. As a result export order worth US\$ 352.26 million has been achieved. Moreover, as a part of export market expansion activities, necessary initiative has been carried out to send trade delegation to Russia, Ukraine, West Africa and Brazil.

In recognition of Exporter’s contribution in the export trade arena export trophy and Commercially Important Person (CIP) card had been awarded every year. The effort undertaken by EPB creates the competitive environment among the exporters that result in favorable impact on export trade. Seventy five companies under 25 products categories had been awarded gold, silver and bronze trophies each year. Apart from this, in recognition of exporter’s achievement in different product categories, 125 outstanding businessmen and 40 individual (as ex-officio exporters) had been declared as CIP (in export category). ■

Source: Export Promotion Bureau of Bangladesh
(<http://www.epb.gov.bd>)

Bangladesh: Your assured destination for Investment

Bangladesh is a vibrant economy that has, despite the recent global economic meltdown, maintained a consistent growth rate of around 6%. With a population of close to 150 million people, Bangladesh boasts of an efficient and entrepreneur workforce that is changing the profile of the economy. Bangladesh's seaports, historically, had been 'ports of call' of ancient traders, and hub of economic activity connecting the West and the Far East. Today we are witnessing Bangladesh's resurgence as a regional hub. Bangladesh occupies a strategic location as a bridge between South and South-East Asia and beyond. Despite the recent global economic crisis, Bangladesh's undisturbed and consistent growth over the past decade has proved the resilience of its economy. Its favorable investment climate has been lauded by many around the world. Bangladesh has listed in Goldman Sachs' 'Next II' and JP Morgan's 'Frontier Five.' Standard and Poor (S & P) as well as Moody's have placed Bangladesh ahead of all countries in South Asia, except India.

Why Bangladesh?

Industrious low-cost workforce : Bangladesh offers a well-educated, highly adaptive and industrious workforce with the lowest wages and salaries in the region. 57.3% of the population is under 25, providing a youthful group for recruitment. The country has consistently developed a skilled workforce aiming to cater the need of investors. English is widely spoken, making communication easy. Thousands of Bangladesh nationals who have wide work experience abroad add to the national reservoir of skill.

Strong Local market and growth : Bangladesh has proved to be an attractive investment location with its approx. 150 million population and consistent economic growth leading to strong and growing domestic demand. Its policy is to establish a strong regional connectivity among the immediate neighbours. Already agreement on connectivity has been reached between Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Bhutan which opens the great opportunities in the huge next door markets. Its close proximity to China and India also opens doors to a vast market which is projected to grow to 3 billion by 2050.

Low cost of energy and land : Energy prices in

Bangladesh are most competitive in the region. Transportation on green compressed natural gas is less than 20% of the diesel price. Many a multinational companies have already invested in gas exploration in Bangladesh. The cost of land is also lowest in the region.

Proven export competitiveness: Bangladesh enjoys quota and tariff-free access to the European Union, Canada, Australia and Japan. It enjoys GSP facilities as LDC country for export to USA. Her annual export growth has been recorded recently 19.6% which is a testimony to its export competitiveness.

Competitive incentives : Bangladesh offers the most liberal FDI regime in fiscal and non-fiscal incentives South Asia, allowing 100% foreign equity with unrestricted exit policy, remittance of royalty and repatriation of profits and income.

Special Economic Zones: Bangladesh offers export-oriented industrial enclaves with infrastructural facilities and logistical support for foreign investors. The country is also developing its core infrastructures, including roads, highways, surface transport and port facilities for a better business environment. A billion dollar credit has been inked with India recently for infrastructure development including communication and transport sectors and facilities at sea ports.

Positive climate: Bangladesh has a largely homogenous society with people living in harmony irrespective of race and religion. Bangladesh, having a democratic country enjoying broad bi-partisan political support for private investment, now boasts for its political stability, containment of extremism. It offers 100% foreign equity or ownership in industrial investment. Foreign exchange regulations have been relaxed to the maximum limit and its currency Taka has been made convertible. Repatriation of foreign capital along with profit/dividends has been made easy and simplified. There is no restriction on issuing Work Permit to a foreign national. Board of Investment (BOI) offers one stop service to the investors.

Direct supervision of Prime Minister's Office (PMO): All the major organizations dealing ▶▶

▶ investment, such as BOI, BEPZA, etc., have been kept under direct supervision of the Hon'ble Prime Minister in order to ensure timely services, easy process and one-stop service for investment and to address directly any problems therein.

Legal Protection: An Act of Parliament passed in 1980 guarantees legal protection against nationalization and expropriation. Non-commercial risks of investment are also covered by the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA). Bangladesh is also a party to Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC),

USA ; International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID); World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). Agreements on Avoidance of Double Taxation have been signed with many countries (28) including Japan, U.K., Italy, Canada, Sweden, Malaysia, Singapore and the Republic of Korea. Some more such agreements (9) are being negotiated.

Furthermore, Bangladesh offers some competitive Investment Incentives:

- Corporate tax holiday (Outside EPZs) : 5 to 7 years for selected sectors;
- Accelerated depreciation on cost of machinery for new industry in lieu of tax holiday;
- Reduced Corporate Tax for 5 to 7 years in lieu of tax holidays and accelerated depreciation;
- Tariff concessions on import of capital machinery, tariff concessions on import of raw materials of the export oriented industries, bonded warehousing facilities, etc.;
- Cash incentives and export subsidies ranging from 5% to 20 % on the FOB value of selected products;
- Funds for exports promotion, exports credit guar-

antee scheme, permission for domestic sales up to 20% by export-oriented companies outside EPZ;

- Remittance of royalty, technical know-how and technical assistance fees;
- Citizenship by investing a minimum of US\$ 5,00,000 and permanent resident permits on investing US\$ 75,000.

The special incentives offered to business located in 8(eight) EPZs include:

- 10 years tax holiday;
- Concessionary tax for 5 years, after 10 years;
- Duty and tax free exports from the EPZ;
- Readymade factory building;
- Excellent infrastructure logistics;
- Duty free import of Machinery, raw and construction materials;
- Business and administrative support services;

It offers also special incentives for investment in power sector. Power sector is on the forefront of all infrastructure projects. Special incentives in this sector include 15 years tax holidays; exemption of import duties, value added tax (VAT), surcharges and import permit fees on imports of plants, equipments and spare parts up to ten percent of the original value of total plant and equipment within a period of twelve years of commercial operation. Incentives also include exemption of tax on foreign lending, foreign loan interest, royalties, technical know-how and assistance fees, free repatriation of equity and dividends, etc.

*Source: Board of Investment, Bangladesh
(http://www.boi.gov.bd)*

Sector opportunities: Shipbuilding Industry in Bangladesh

Introduction

Water transport is the cheapest one in every parts of the world. So people started giving due importance to water transports since the economic activities started. Bangladesh has a long history of shipbuilding as regards riverine, coastal and ocean-faring vessels. The large international market for small ocean-faring vessels, the impact of labor cost on such vessels and

abundance of skilled labor at low price have made Bangladesh a competitive shipbuilding country.

Present position of shipbuilding industry in Bangladesh

Major shipbuilding countries such as Korea, China, Japan, and Vietnam have all moved their focus towards building large ocean-faring vessels, for which less intensive labor is required. This, however, has left ▶▶

▶ an opportunity for developing countries like Bangladesh to produce small sized ocean-faring vessels, not exceeding 25,000 Dead Weight Tonnage (DWT) capacity. Bangladesh, India and Indonesia are trying to avail this opportunity as all of them have abundant and low waged labors. Moreover, they have skilled and semi skilled labors in this sector for many decades. Cargo vessels under inland shipping ordinance began during eighties with sizes from 200 DWT to 500 DWT. Such construction did not require any organized dockyard or shipyard. These vessels were built on bare land on the river side, scattered around the country especially where electricity was available on the river banks and construction of inland vessels flourished. Presently, the industries manufacturing row ferries, tug boats, fishing trawlers, inland oil tankers, etc. are catering to the local demand. With the ship-breaking industry flourishing in Chittagong, availability of steel plates boosted the inland shipbuilding in the early nineties and various shipyards started to emerge in this sector. As of today, about 200 locally-built cargo vessels of varying sizes—from 500 DWT to 2000 DWT are now operating and one thousand vessels having 1000 passengers capacity each are transporting passengers on our inland riverine roots. Moreover, today there are about 300 small and large dockyards, generating about 100,000 jobs.

A total number of 30 shipbuilding industry has so far been registered with Board of Investment (BOI). Out of these, 22 are local investment projects, 07 are joint venture projects and the rest one is 100% foreign owned project. The total proposed investment of these projects is around Taka 847 crore and bulk of which is local investment that comes around Taka 720 crore. Excepting a few, most of the items of product are riverine and coastal cargoes, row ferries, tug boats, fishing trawlers, inland oil tankers and so on.

Potential Bangladeshi Ocean –faring Shipbuilders

– Khulna Shipyard Ltd (KSY) is located on 68.97 acres (approximately 279,000 m²) of land at Labanchara, Khulna, on the bank of river Qazi Bacha, branch of the Rupsha. It is about 45 km north from Mongla Sea Port. The shipyard was founded in 1954 and commissioned in 1957. It was taken over by the Bangladesh navy in 1999. It has significant capacity for servicing ships and this can be transformed into ocean-faring vessel building

shipyard relatively quickly and with significantly less investment than founding a new shipyard.

- The Meghna Group recently signed a US\$ 35 million deal with South Korean shipbuilding giant STX to build the country's largest ship-manufacturing facility. The company will have the capacity to build ships up to 25,000 DWT and is situated on 33 acres of land (approximately 133,500 m²) on the Meghna River. The Meghna Group is also contemplating setting up a steel plant that could meet the requirements of the shipbuilding industry.
- Dockyard & Engineering Works Limited (DEWL) is the country's oldest shipbuilder and is currently run by the Bangladesh Navy. It has already made a decision to develop its existing infrastructure to international standards to lure export orders from overseas buyers. DEWL is situated on 22 acres (approximately 89,000 m²) of land at Sonakanda in Narayanganj district on the bank of Sitalakhya River. It currently has facilities for building Ro-Ro ferries, tugboats, inland and coastal vessels. DEWL is planning to install capacity to build ships of up to 8,000 DWT.
- The Karnaphuli-based Rangs Group is in the process of setting up Desh Shipbuilding at a cost of Tk 100 crore (approximately @ 14.5 million) at Sadar Ghat in Chittagong.
- Meghna Ghat-base Khan Brothers has invested around Tk. 16 crore (approximately \$ 2.3 million) to develop a shipbuilding infrastructure at Gazaria in Munshiganj near the Meghna Bridge outside Dhaka.
- Bengal Electric has acquired approximately 50 acres (202,000 m²) of land in Munshiganj to start shipbuilding for export. The construction work of slipway is now under way.

Entering export market of Bangladeshi ship

Cost-effective human resource in comparison with other shipbuilding nations and comparative advantages such as simple importation facility of raw materials, duty free market access for Bangladesh ships to other countries have encouraged the Bangladesh entrepreneurs of this sector to come forward in export business. Bangladesh got its first exposure of international shipbuilding in 1979. Japanese shipbuilding giant Mitsui Engineering and shipbuilding industry ▶▶

▶ developed the first and the largest joint venture shipyard with High Speed Shipbuilding Engineering Co. Ltd. at Fatullah, Dhaka and were able to build eight grain carriers under international tender floated by FAO according to the international classification. It built the first barge-mounted power plant for Rural Power Company, several oil tankers, first moving patrol boat for Navy and troops carrier for the Bangladesh Army. In 2005, Ananda Shipyards and Slipways Ltd secured the first order for ocean-faring vessels from a high end market like

World's top shipbuilders keen to invest in Bangladesh

The 24th biennial Shipbuilding Machinery and Marine Technology (SMM-2010) Trade Fair was held on September 14, 2010 at Hamburg, port city of German. A number of Bangladeshi shipbuilders participated in the fair. The fair brought a good opportunity for Bangladesh Shipbuilders to contact foreign clients & investors face to face. Over 2,000 exhibitors from more than 60 countries participated. World's top shipbuilders participated in the fair have shown their keen interest to invest in Bangladesh for its labour cost effectiveness.

Source: The New Nation, Internet Edition, September 14, 2010.

Denmark by competing with Chinese and Vietnamese shipbuilders and delivered the first ship in the first half of 2008. Later on, it received a number of orders and delivered, while a second company, Western Marine, has also received a significant number of orders and already delivered a ship. Ananda Shipyard has successfully completed 05 nos. of exportable ships. These have either been exported or in the process of export. Among these, 04 vessels have been made for Mozambique and 01 for Holland. Moreover, 24 Multi Purpose Cargo Vessels are under construction having dead weight from 5500 DWT to 7250 DWT. All these cargo vessels will be exported to Germany. The other shipbuilding giant 'Western Marine Shipyard' has also exported 01 Floating Reception Vessel to Finland on 13th January, 2010. Moreover, 04 more 5200 DWT Multi Purpose Cargoes will be exported within December, 2010 to Germany. Another 12 vessels are under construction and will be exported in 2011 & 2012 as per contact. Out of these 12 exportable vessels, 02 are Passenger Boats to be built for Pakistan, 08 are Multi Purpose Cargoes to be constructed for Germany and rest 02 are also Multi Purpose Cargoes to be made for Denmark. This has attracted other local investors to invest in this sector. Most of them are trying to upgrade their existing facilities to meet the international standards.

As a result of the growth in international trade volumes, the market for small ocean-faring vessels grew

significantly and is now estimated to be as big as US\$ 400 billion annually. Several sources are optimistic that Bangladesh could achieve at least 1% market share, i.e. exports of as much as US\$4 billion annually. Moreover, it is estimated that shipbuilding industry could become the second biggest exporting industry in Bangladesh by 2015.

Investment opportunities for shipbuilding industry in Bangladesh:

- Long shipbuilding history
- Ample supply of skilled labor
- Low cost, high productivity labor
- Labor's Knowledge of English (as compared to China/Vietnam)

- Accredited training institute to train artisans
- Reverine nature of the country
- All the small ships exported till date are regarded as of high quality
- Repeat orders received by the shipbuilders
- Some spare, capacity currently available
- There are a lot of dockyards that can be converted rapidly to build ocean faring vessels
- Simple importation facilities
- Green Channel Clearance Facilities
- Shipbuilding industry has been included in the export list and indentified as a thrust sector in the national industrial policy 2010.
- Duty free market access for Bangladeshi ships to other countries
- 100% foreign equity is allowed.

Investment Incentives

Bangladesh offers favorable investment climate compared to the other South Asians economics. For detail please visit Board of Investment (BOI) Website: <http://www.boi.gov.bd>

Considering the market size (Local & Global), duty free market access, cost-effective human resource, other costs & regulatory environment of investment, investing in the shipbuilding industry in Bangladesh has been deemed highly attractive and profitable. ■

*Source: Board of Investment, Bangladesh (Adapted Version)
(<http://www.boi.gov.bd>)*

Destination: The Sundarbans

- *The Largest Mangrove Forest in the World & Home to the Royal Bengal Tiger*

The *Sundarbans*, a World Heritage site, is composed of three wildlife sanctuaries, namely the Sundarbans East Wildlife Sanctuary, Sundarban South Wildlife Sanctuary and Sundarbans West Wildlife Sanctuary. The total area of the World Heritage Site is 1400 sq. km., out of which 910 sq. km. is land area and 490 sq. km. is water. A complex network of tidal waterways, mudflats and small islands with salt-tolerant mangrove forest, make up the three sanctuaries.

The area has been recognized globally for its importance as a reservoir of biodiversity. The mangrove supports a unique assemblage of flora and fauna, including charismatic mega - fauna like the Royal Bengal Tiger, the estuarine crocodile and the Ganges river dolphin or *susuk*. The *Sundari* tree, after which the Sundarbans is named, is native to this forest.

A visit to Bangladesh would remain incomplete if the *Sundarbans* did not appear in the itinerary. It is situated in the southwest corner of Bangladesh. It is the largest mangrove forest in the world, criss-



crossed by creeks and canals creeping around thousand of islets that swell and sink with the tide in the Bay. The cluster of isles, the water bodies and mangrove together support an ecosystem at once unique with the result that the

Sundarbans could be easily developed into a treasure house of biodiversity. It is home to 80% of reptiles, 40% of mammals' species and about 50% of



all bird species found in Bangladesh. Of the 35 mangrove plant-species spotted in the whole world, 14 are found in the *Sundarbans*. The total area of the *Sundarbans* is 5772.85 sq.km. The forest occupies 4016.85 sq.km. of land while rivers, canals and channels occupy 1756 sq.km.

The mangrove forest in the *Sundarbans*, particularly in the three wildlife sanctuaries, acts as a good nursery and potential breeding ground for shrimps, prawns and many other edible fish. For its outstanding natural value, the World Heritage Committee of the UNESCO inscribed the *Sundarbans* of Bangladesh in the World Heritage list in their 21st session in 1997 and accordingly the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh declared the Sundarbans as a World Heritage Site in 1999. ▶▶



Mangrove forest - the largest in the world

The Sundarbans – The largest mangrove forest in the world & home to the Royal Bengal Tiger

► The attractions of this forest are varied and many. Wild, unspoiled and unpolluted beaches are scattered here and there along the borderline of the Bay. The flora of the *Sundarbans* includes *Sundari*, *Keora*, *Gewa*, *Golpata*, *Goran* and *Passur* trees. The fauna can boast the legendary Royal Bengal tiger spotted deer, squirrel, rhesus monkey, barking deer, wild boar, dolphin, etc. Of the reptile species, there are the estuarine crocodiles, pythons, lizards, flap-shelled spotted turtles and green turtles.

The fish population comprises *vetki*, *rekha*, *boncha*, *faissa*, *pangash*, *ritba*, *silon*, *hilsba*, *catfish*, *lobster*, *shrimp*, *prawn*, etc.



Golpata (Nypa fruticans) of Sundarbans

The forest is a birdwatchers' paradise as it is the abode of varieties of rare and colourful birds like the pond heron, kingfisher, cattle egret, little egret, golden plover, white-beaked vulture, fishing eagle, white-breasted eagle, red jungle fowl and so on. The noteworthy beauty spots of the Sundarbans are *Katka*, *Kachikbali*, *Karamjal*, *Nilkamal*, *Hironpoint*, *Dublar Char*, etc.

How to Reach & Where to Stay:

The best time to visit the Sundarbans is from November to March. Exciting honey collection season is during April-May. Hunting is prohibited by law in the country for the preservation of wild life. Water transport is the only means of communication for visiting the Sundarbans from Khulna or Mongla Port. Boats, speed boats, country boats as well as mechanized vessels from the Mongla Port Authority might be hired for visiting the Sundarbans. From Dhaka, tourists may travel by air, or by road to Khulna, the gateway to the Sundarbans.



Spotted deer at Sundarbans

For accommodation, tourist may contact **Bangladesh Parjatan (Tourism) Corporation**. **Mongla Port Authority** has comfortable three-storied **Rest House in Hiron Point** and there is also **Forest Department's Rest House** located in **Katka**. Besides, a number of private hotels, guest and rest-houses are available for tourists. Prior reservation is advisable. One may contact Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation for detailed information about the visits to the *Sundarbans*. ■

Please visit the website to vote for the Sundarbans: <http://www.new7wonders.com>

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Bhutanese Prime Minister visits Bangladesh



The Prime Minister H.E. Jigme Yoser Thinley of Bhutan paid an official visit to Bangladesh during 10-14 January 2011 with a view to further strengthening the economic and political ties along with enhancing diplomatic and commercial relations. During bilateral meeting on 10 January 2011, the Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina deeply appreciated Bhutan's support for Bangladesh's War of Liberation in 1971 and its being the first country to recognize Bangladesh. She wanted enhanced bilateral

ties in areas including trade, tourism, power, climate change, health, education, agriculture, IT and water resources management.

Bhutan assured Bangladesh of extending cooperation in the hydropower sector, in which the Himalayan country has huge potential. Bhutanese Prime Minister also assured that as an upstream country Bhutan would protect the interests of downstream Bangladesh regarding free flow of common rivers. After the talks, Bangladesh and Bhutan signed an agreement on cultural exchange and a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the health sector. ■

Bangladesh advance in Investment Rankings



**JAPAN BANK FOR
JBIC INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

Bangladesh has advanced 13 steps in an international ranking of potential countries for foreign investors and ranked 15th (28th in 2009) in an international ranking among the investment-potential countries for the foreign investors and businessmen in 2010, according to a survey carried out by Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). Mr. Ryuchi Kaga, executive officer of JBIC Asia and Oceania region submitted the study report to Industries Minister H.E. Mr. Dilip Barua, MP in Dhaka on 06 January 2011. He indicated interest of Japanese investors in shifting their investment focus on Bangladesh.

He reported their interest in high-tech textiles, information technology and railway and road communication infrastructures in Bangladesh. The Hon Industries Minister welcomed the Japanese investment interest and enumerated advantages and incentives for foreign investors investing in Bangladesh.

Besides, Australian High Commissioner in Bangladesh Dr Justin Lee on 15 January 2011 said that the government's initiatives to advance development and welfare programmes could attract more foreign investment to contribute to the economic growth in Bangladesh. ■

Environmental compliance survey in RMG sector starts

Survey programme of the environmental compliance project on ready-made garments (RMG) sector was inaugurated in Dhaka to increase green production capability in the sector and attract more foreign buyers. The South-Asia Enterprise Development

Facility (SEDF) along with Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and Bangladesh Export Oriented Garments Washing Industries Owners Association (BEOGWIOA) launched the project. ■

Bangladesh - a 'big' market

The head of Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) of Bangladesh on 16 January 2011 in Dhaka urged overseas investors

to invest in Bangladesh, a "big market" and resilient economy. 'Bangladesh is quite a big market. Even if 10 percent of its population is taken into ►►

► consideration, it is a substantial market for any product,' AM Hamim Rahmatullah, President of FICCI said. "The economic fundamentals are strong and many of the indices of economic growth are becoming less volatile over time. Exports are up, remittances from abroad are growing, foreign exchange reserves are comfortable and inflation is within control," he added. He further said that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has suggested: Bangladesh economy has

become the 48th largest in the world with the size of 225 billion dollars on purchasing power parity (PPP) basis. The investment and trade regimes of the country were "highly favourable" to attract foreign investors compared to other countries in its region. Bangladesh had recently received encouraging sovereign credit rating from Moody's Investors Services and Standard and Poor's (S&P). ■

Dhaka Elevated Expressway Project to start



The Ministry of Communication, Bangladesh signed an agreement with a private investment company, namely Italian-Thai Public Development Company Ltd for the Dhaka Elevated Expressway Project worth US\$ 1.25 billion on 19 January 2011. "It (expressway) is a long cherished demand of the people to get relief from nagging traffic congestion in this busy

city," Hon. Communication Minister Mr. Syed Abul Hussain, MP told newsmen while signing the agreement for the construction of the four-lane 21 km expressway having extra links of 10 kms at ten link points in Dhaka. The expressway would have five-km intersections at two mid points to link major streets in the capital. The project would be funded under a public-private partnership (PPP). ■

Bangladesh eyes increase export earnings from EU



The Hon. Commerce Minister Lt Col (ret'd) Faruk Khan, MP said that Bangladesh's export earning might exceed US \$20 billion in the current fiscal year (2010-11), surpassing the target. (Target was fixed at \$18.5 bn.) The Minister hoped that Bangladesh would earn US

\$10-\$12 billion this year by exporting goods to the European Union countries as new GSP rules came into effect from the beginning of January 2011. He was speaking at a seminar on 'Ways and Means to Convert Bangladesh into an Industrially Developed Country,' at Dhaka University on 15 January 2011. ■

Bangladesh: Next destination for investment



Bangladesh could be the next ideal destination for investment as its markets are opening up amid industrial resurgence and the country is ready to launch and march forward, Mr. Aniruddha Lahiri, vice chairman of AmCham India said in meeting between the 18-member team of AmCham India led by Mr. Lahiri and the

Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) in Dhaka on 09 February 2011. "Its markets are opening and industrial resurgence is taking place", he said. Mr. Lahiri said the two countries (Bangladesh and India) should work together to explore common interests in trade and business across the border and in and beyond the region.

Mitsubishi signs MoU to assemble its next sedan in Bangladesh

The state-owned Pragati Industries Ltd. of Bangladesh is set to manufacture high quality sedan (Lancer- EX) cars, a new model vehicle of Mitsubishi Motors Corporation, in the country by June 2012. To this effect, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the PIL and the MMC in Dhaka on 09 February 2011. Mitsubishi Global President Mr. Osamu Masuko told the reporters that his company and

Bangladesh government agreed to do the feasibility study of a sedan car assembling project in Bangladesh for the next six months so that manufacturing of the vehicle with a 1,300-cc engine could be started by June, 2012 in Bangladesh. The family saloon will be the third Mitsubishi vehicle, after the Pajero and Pajero Sport, to be assembled in Bangladesh. ■



Handicrafts from Bangladesh



Handicrafts products of Bangladesh are the symbol of our rich socio cultural heritage as they reflect and represent the socio cultural treasures and artistic mind of the people of this land. The six seasons of Bangladesh have added variety and color to our handicrafts. Traditional skill and craftsmanship inherited from the forefathers by the artisans together with modern views and aesthetics have given a special dimension to our products. Craftsmen in Bangladesh are mainly based in rural areas produce their products by utilizing locally available raw materials like wood, bamboo, cane, straw, clay, grass, copper, brass,

textile, leather, jute fibres, grass, weeds, etc. however, the range of products so made meanwhile have been admired in the markets of developed countries for their designs, durability, environment friendliness, and above all their artistic mark. Buyers from everywhere may choose to find Bangladesh as one of their safe sourcing place of goods like porcelain items, baskets, light furniture, bags, wallets, fancy shopping bags, pottery, wall hangings, travel kits, toys, ashtrays, carpets, renowned embroidered quilts, writing materials, boutique items, etc. which at present are mainly going to Italy, US, UK, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Japan, Austria, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Spain, Belgium, UAE, Denmark, Portugal, New Zealand, Switzerland, Finland, Turkey, South Africa, Sweden, Norway, Finland etc. ■

Bush Slaton, LP. to setup Waste to Energy Plant in Bangladesh

Bush Slaton, LP., a multinational consulting firm, announced on 11 February 2011 that it had executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to develop a joint venture with Naanovo Energy UK Limited to build a US\$ 300 million Waste to Energy (WTE) Plant in Bangladesh. The six-module plant will provide 42 Megawatts of electricity for the city of Dhaka, Bangladesh, and will utilize Naanovo's proprietary WTE/Maax™ plant design. The six (6) module WTE/Maax™ plant will be capable of combusting one thousand and eighty (1,080) tons of municipal solid

waste (MSW) per day. The unsorted MSW feedstock will be reduced to levels that are below 10% of its original volume and 20% of its original weight, with the resulting ash residue being used in the production of cinder blocks and other concrete products. The plant will also produce significant quantities of potable water and scrap metal, along with the ash products, for resale into the local market. Approximately, 100 full-time plant jobs and up to 500 construction jobs will be created by the project. ■

Japanese company to setup power plant in Bangladesh

Bangladesh government went into an agreement with a Japanese corporation worth US\$ 376 million to set up a 360-megawatt combined cycle power plant (gas and oil fired power plant) and associated substations in Haripur by August of 2013. Electricity Generation Company Ltd (EGCL), an enterprise of Bangladesh Power

Development Board (PDB), signed the deal with Marubeni Corporation of Japan at Biddut Bhaban in Dhaka on 09 February 2011. Bangladesh plans to add about 1 billion cubic feet (bcf) of natural gas per day to its national grid by the end of 2012 to ease supply shortfalls, the head of Bangladesh Oil, Gas and Mineral Corporation or Petrobangla said. ■



21 FEBRUARY

- National Martyr's Day: A Perpetual Source of Inspiration



21 February 1952. The day is called 'Amar Ekushay' (Immortal 21st) in Bangla and is observed in Bangladesh as the National 'Martyr's Day' every year. This day has also been recognized by the

UNESCO as the 'International Mother Language Day' and is observed internationally. 21 February is an indelible landmark in the history of Bangladesh that swells the sentiment of its people with the fragrance of pride as the Day acted as the turning point in the Nation's history. The Day now provides the opportunity and encourages all nations represented in the UN to take resolve and do their best to save the mother tongues of their respective language communities and literature, culture, and traditional knowledge based on those languages from extinction.

The Language Movement in brief:

The Language Movement was a political and cultural agitation in Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) that centred on the demand for recognition of the Bangla language as one of the state languages of Pakistan and a broader reaffirmation of the ethno-national consciousness of the Bengali people that formed the majority of the then Pakistan populace. Discontent against Pakistan's "Urdu-only" policy had swelled into mass agitation since 1948 and reached its climactic strength after police fired upon and killed student demonstrators on February 21, 1952. Death of Dhaka University students and other language martyrs joining the protest namely Abdus Salam, Rafiq Uddin Ahmed, Abul Barkat, and Abdul Jabbar served to provoke widespread strikes and

protests led by Bengalee speaking people and political parties in the then East Pakistan. The central government relented, granting official status to Bangla.

The Language Movement served as a catalyst for the assertion of the Bengali cultural and national identity within Pakistan. The agitation also served to intensify the political and sectional rivalries between the two wings of Pakistan. The movement served as an inspiration and forerunner to Bengalee nationalist agitations against the political and economic domination of the then West Pakistan, including the 6-point movement and subsequently the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. In Bangladesh, 21 February is commemorated annually as the Martyr's Day. The Shaheed Minar (Martyr's Monument) was constructed to commemorate the Language Movement and pay homage to those who made supreme sacrifice for establishing Bangla in its rightful honour. In 1999, February 21 the UNESCO declared the Day as the International Mother Language Day by the United Nations. During the inauguration of the International Language Institute in Dhaka (to promote study and research of and cooperation for different languages of the world) by Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in 2001 the then UN Secretary General Mr. Kofi Annan was present.

Observance of 21 February in Bangladesh:

The Language Movement had a major impact on the art and culture of the erstwhile East Pakistan and later of independent Bangladesh. The spirit and success of the movement raised considerable interest and enthusiasm for the study and development of ▶▶

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► Bengali culture. Commemoration of the language movement martyrs and celebration of the International Mother Language Day is one of the most important national events in Bangladesh. People from all walks of life place floral wreaths and bouquets at the central Martyrs' Memorial, constructed in 1954 and located near the Dhaka Medical College to pay homage to the martyrs of the Language Movement. The Day is observed in all places across the country and people place floral wreaths at their local Memorials (replicas of the central one). Special prayers are also offered for the

martyrs. Most celebratory part of this commemoration is a month long book fair in February every year held at the Bangla Academy premises which offers the ground and opportunity of a daily concentration of cultural activities and performances of the country. A large number of new books are brought out on the occasion. This year more than 3000 new books came out. Thousands of enthusiastic readers and visitors gravitate to the fair every day including the writers and authors from different countries including the Bengali speaking ones of West Bengal, India. ■



The sculpture 'Moder Garob' (our pride), a group of busts, depicting the Language Movement martyrs - Rafiq, Salam, Jabbar, Barkat and Shafiur.

The sculpture, made of bronze and terracotta, was unveiled at the Bangla Academy premises on 1 February, 2007.

Embassy Activities

Celebration of the Martyr's Day and the International Mother Language Day in Sweden



Bangladesh Ambassador. Special prayers were offered

The Martyr's Day and the International Mother Language Day was observed at the Mission on 21 February 2010, in a befitting manner. The programme started in the morning with hoisting of the national flag at half-mast by

for the language martyrs and for the continued peace and prosperity of Bangladesh. A discussion meeting and a cultural programme were held at the Embassy premises in the afternoon to commemorate the day. The messages of the Hon'ble President, the Hon'ble Prime Minister, and the Hon'ble Foreign Minister on the day were read out. A discussion meeting was held with the participation of the invited guests ►►

including a good number of students.

In his speech, H.E. the Ambassador paid rich tributes to the martyrs of the Language Movement and recalled their supreme sacrifice for our mother tongue Bangla. He explained the significance of the Day and contribution of the 21 February in all areas of national life of Bangladesh. He also highlighted the message of the Day in the context of the mother tongues of different language communities of the world i.e. international efforts for research, study, and cooperation of Governments to protect and promote mother languages everywhere.



The Day was also observed in other places of Sweden outside the Embassy arrangements and some Swedish schools and universities did that with students, parents and academic people of different language communities in Sweden. One was held by Marsta commune involving all schools there, near Stockholm (Photo here), one in the university of Mälardalen, Västerås and one in the town of Umea. ■

Ambassador presented his credentials in Iceland and Finland

Ambassador Mr. AFM Gousal Azam Sarker presented his credentials to the President of Iceland H.E. Mr. Olafur Ragnar Grimsson on 22 February 2011 as Ambassador of Bangladesh to Iceland. While receiving the credentials, the President of Iceland assured him of all support in his pursuit to strengthen bilateral relations between the two friendly countries of Iceland and Bangladesh. During the visit, the Ambassador had meetings with, among others, Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Permanent Secretaries of the Ministry of Industry, Energy, and Tourism, and the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture.



Ambassador AFM Gousal Azam Sarker, who is also accredited as the Ambassador of Bangladesh to Finland, presented his credentials to the President of Finland HE Ms. Tarja Halonen on 17 March 2011. During his visit to Finland he met, among others, officials in the Foreign Ministry, Agricultural Ministry, representatives of various trade bodies, businesses and industries and discussed matters of mutual interest. He also attended a National Day celebration organized by Bangladesh community in Finland as a special guest. Finnish Immigration Minister was present at the programme as chief guest and Finnish President Ms. Halonen sent a greeting message. ■



Observance of the holy Eid-e-Miladunnabi

The holy Eid-e-Miladunnabi, commemorating the birth-and- death anniversary of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM), was observed by the Mission on 16 February 2011. On this occasion, the Mission organized a

discussion meeting and a Milad Mahfil at the Embassy premises in which the holy Prophet's life was discussed and emphasis was given on following the life and principles of the Prophet. ■

IMPORTANT LINKS

Government Organizations

Bangladesh Government Website :
<http://www.bangladesh.gov.bd/>

Prime Minister's office :
<http://www.pmo.gov.bd/>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs :
<http://www.mofa.gov.bd/>

Ministry of Commerce :
<http://www.mincom.gov.bd/>

National Board of Revenue :
<http://www.nbr-bd.org/>

Bangladesh Tariff Commission :
<http://www.bdtariffcom.org/>

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics :
<http://www.bbs.gov.bd/>

Bangladesh Bank :
<http://www.bangladesh-bank.org/>

Biman Bangladesh Airlines :
<http://www.biman-airlines.com>

NGO Affairs Bureau :
<http://www.ngoab.gov.bd/>

Tourism & Media

National Tourism Corporation:
<http://www.bangladeshtourism.gov.bd/>

Hotel and Travel Guide :
<http://www.bangladesh.com/>

The Daily Star (English) :
<http://www.thedailystar.net/>

The Financial Express :
<http://www.financialexpress-bd.com/>

The Daily Ittefaq (Bangla) :
<http://www.ittefaq.com/>

Trade, Business & Investment

Board of Investment :
<http://www.boi.gov.bd/>

Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) :
<http://www.epzbangladesh.org.bd/>

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) :
<http://www.bgmea.com/>

Export Promotion Bureau :
<http://epb.gov.bd/>

Registrar of the Joint Stock Companies & Firms :
<http://www.roc.gov.bd/>

Privatization Commission of Bangladesh :
<http://www.pc.gov.bd/>

The Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry :
<http://www.fbcci-bd.org/>

Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry :
<http://www.dhakachamber.com/>

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry:
<http://www.chittagongchamber.com/>

Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry :
<http://www.ficci.org.bd/>

Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry :
<http://www.mccibd.org/>

Dhaka Stock Exchange Limited :
<http://www.dsebd.org/>

Chittagong Stock Exchange :
<http://csebd.com/cse/start.html>

Business Information :
<http://www.bizinfo-bangladesh.com/>

Bangladesh Yellow Pages :
<http://www.bgyellowpages.com/>

For More Information on Bangladesh as well as consular, trade, business and tourist information, please visit Bangladesh Embassy website at <http://www.bangladoot.se>

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