



The Embassy of Bangladesh
Stockholm

The Colours of Bangladesh

Kaleidoscope

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Inside this Issue:

Perspective.....	: 02	Feature.....	: 07
Current Affairs.....	: 03	Business, Economy, Trade & Investment.....	: 09
Foreign Affairs.....	: 04	Embassy Activities.....	: 11
News Items.....	: 05	History & Culture.....	: 14

First Word

I extend to our dear readers the greetings of a happy new Bengali year of 1418 and share with them the joy of celebration not only of the new Bengali year but also of the 150th birth anniversary of the greatest Bengali literary and cultural genius Rabindranath Tagore. With the celebrations in Bangladesh and abroad the people of the world in general and that of the Nordic region in particular came to have a glimpse of the richness and strengths of Bengali culture and the height to which Tagore took Bengali literature. We are not only celebrating Tagore's 150th birth anniversary in 2011 we have also plan and programmes to celebrate 100th anniversary of his English Gitanjali in 2012, and 100th anniversary of his winning Nobel Prize in 2013. It came as no surprise to me that Tagore is well known in the Nordic region and many organizations here both of

Bangladesh community origin and local origin of the Nordic countries have arranged and are putting up programmes in celebration and commemoration.

While the issue of Kaleidoscope has these celebrations in focus, this has also highlighted, as usual, our national events and news and developments in political, economic, business, cultural and community life of Bangladesh. We have started with this issue full page coverage of Bangladesh community living in the Nordic countries. I believe, a reading of the issue will reinvigorate your interest in Bangladesh, as it performed well during the period covered, and will contribute to the reorientation of your perception about the country. Please stay in touch with us-with Bangladesh.

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

Editor's Note

The threat of looming global economic crisis has been undermining the warmth of summer this year. The US, as a key economy, failing to live up to the expectation has put additional responsibility on the economies like Germany and Asian growth economies to perform even stronger to keep the world out of deep recession. Bangladesh, in this context, is ready to do its part. The government has declared the budget for 2011-12 FY with a target to post a GDP growth of 7% and has taken steps to reach a growth level of 8% by 2014-15 FY.

This year Bangladesh has become world's largest knitwear exporter in volume ahead of Turkey. Overall export growth of the country was more than 40%. Steady and impressive performance of Bangladesh economy even during and aftermath of global economic crisis, has resulted global attention. During a visit to Bangladesh in last May, the Managing Director of Samsung has proposed an investment of US\$ 1.25 billion to set up plants for manufacturing mobile

phone, electrical, electronics, and home appliances. Samsung has already opened an R&D center in Dhaka this year. Meanwhile, Thailand is investing US\$ 2 billion in the Dhaka elevated expressway of Dhaka and has a plan to invest another US\$ 1.2 billion in power sector. Thailand is also keen to invest in hospitality sector. Foreign Trade Minister of UAE Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi visited Bangladesh in June to explore business opportunities in agriculture, food processing, hospitality, and tourism sector. Among others, two business delegations in agriculture and textile sector from Denmark and Norway have taken up successful visits to Bangladesh in recent times to find partners.

We hope you will enjoy this issue of newsletter which we have organized, apart from news on business and economy, with features on celebration of Nababarsha, the Bangla New Year, Embassy activities and on picturesque hill district of Khagrachari.

Khandker Masudul Alam
First Secretary

Hon'ble Prime Minister attends conferences and summit

Visit to Switzerland: The Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina attended the 64th session of the World Health Assembly (WHA) in Geneva in May (attended by 193 countries) and while addressing the session on 17 May 2011 she sought reforms of global health systems and institutions like WHO and increased financial support so that WHO could provide authoritative health services and technical support to member countries. She hoped that the global community would continue their support to Bangladesh's effort to make population an asset instead of being a burden. She also congratulated renowned philanthropist Mr. William H (Bill) Gates, Chairman of Microsoft Corporation and the Bill and Ms. Melinda Gates Foundation, for their magnanimous contribution to the global common good, espe-



H.E. Sheikh Hasina addressed at the 64th Session of the World Health Assembly

cially in the area of public health. While paying a courtesy call on 16 May in Geneva Mr. Gates highly praised Prime Minister for her vision to build a digital Bangladesh and expressed keen interest in working together with Bangladesh to help achieve its millennium development goals. In the margin of Conference the Director General of World Trade Organisation (WTO) Pascal Lamy also called on her and appreciated her for her leadership in giving Bangladesh a strong base for economic development. Climate change, education, healthcare, food security, regional

peace, regional cooperation, regional connectivity, vaccination, good governance, and information technology were also discussed during the call.

Prime Minister in the UN Conference on LDCs in Istanbul:

The Hon'ble Prime Minister took part in the Fourth UN Conference on LDCs in Istanbul in May 2011. In her speech on 10 May 2011 she demanded more support of the affluent nations for the LDCs or emerging economies to enable them to attain sustainable economic growth. "Investment and



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addresses at the fourth UN conference on Least Developed Countries (LDCs) at Istanbul

technical assistance from the South enjoy possibility of easier replication and absorption by the LDCs. South-South Cooperation should be complementary to similar assistance from our traditional development partners in the North," the Prime Minister said. She also warned that time was running out for uplifting the living conditions in the LDCs while new challenges were emerging with globalisation and climate change. She also criticized failure of development partners in meeting their commitments that impeded LDCs' growth prospects. The Prime Minister said Bangladesh made good progress in net enrolment in primary education, gender parity, infant and child mortality, immunization coverage, supply of safe drinking water, and sanitation. In the sidelines of this summit, the Hon'ble Prime Minister had meeting with UNDP Administrator Ms. Helen Clerk. ■

Foreign Minister visits Russia and China

Visit to Russia:

The Hon'ble Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni, MP paid an official visit to Russia during April 6 – 8, 2011 where she had, among others, bilateral talks with her Russian counterpart HE Mr. Sergey Lavrov. The two Ministers reviewed the whole gamut of bilateral relations including economic, energy and power, trade, cultural, educational and defense cooperation. They especially discussed about the Russian cooperation in the construction of Nuclear Power Plant in Bangladesh, reviewed status of a number of proposed agreements and MOUs, duty free and quota free access for Bangladesh products to Russian market, exchange of diplomatic properties etc. The two Foreign Ministers also discussed different regional and international issues of common concern. During her visit, the Bangladesh Foreign Minister also had meeting with the chief executives of State Atomic Energy Corporation 'Rosatom' and the largest oil and gas exploration company 'Gazprom'.



H.E. Dr. Dipu Moni with H.E. Mr. Sergey Lavrov

Visit to China:

The Hon'ble Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni, MP paid an official visit to China at an invitation

of her Chinese counterpart H.E. Mr. Yang Jiechi. During the meeting at the Chinese Foreign Ministry, the two Foreign Ministers had exhaustive discussion on all important bilateral issues. Referring to the historic friendly bonds between the two countries and mentioning about the present cooperation of diverse activities, the

Foreign Minister of Bangladesh invited China's enhanced investment in Bangladesh. It was agreed that both the countries would work for establishing direct road and rail link between Kunming of Southern China and Chittagong of Bangladesh. Bangladesh Foreign Minister also called on H.E. Mr. Xi Jinping, China's Vice President. The Foreign Minister briefed the Chinese Vice President about the ongoing economic cooperation between Bangladesh and China. The Chinese Vice President observed that the two countries shared similar views on many regional and international issues including climate change and food security. The Vice President showed keen interest in the development works of Bangladesh, and assured the Foreign Minister that China would always be a partner of Bangladesh's efforts to become a middle-income country by 2021. ■

Hopes for new momentum in Bangladesh-Singapore Relations

The Hon'ble Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni, MP expressed hope that both Bangladesh and Singapore would build on existing friendly bilateral ties to create a new momentum in the diplomatic relations between the two countries. She told this during her meeting with the new Singapore Foreign Minister K. Shanmugam at the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue on 04 June. Bangladesh Foreign Minister paid a visit to Singa-

pore for attending the 10th IISS Asia Security Summit, Popularly known as the Shangri-La Dialogue during 3-5 June 2011. The two foreign ministers expressed their satisfaction at the current state of bilateral relations while committing to strengthening relations further. Dr. Dipu Moni, MP urged with a hope that Singapore would import more Bangladeshi Products to reduce the trade gap between the two countries. ■

Bangladesh destined to attain 8 percent GDP growth in 2014-15

The Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina informed the national parliament on 01 June 2011 of her government's specific plans to achieve 8.0% GDP growth. The plans included increasing revenue income to 14.6% of GDP, expenditure of Annual Development Programme (ADP) to 6.1% of GDP by 2014-2015 and adding 11,973 megawatt (MW) electricity to the national grid by 2015. She also expressed hope to introduce 3rd Generation (3G) Mobile Phone Network in the country soon. Hon. Post

and Telecommunications Minister Mr. Raziuddin Ahmed Razu, MP also announced government's intention to introduce 3G mobile soon in Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh's GDP at current market price has reached nearly US\$110 billion (increase by US\$ 9 billion in a year) in the outgoing fiscal year (2010-11), the manufacturing sector being at the driving role, according to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). ■

Visit of the Development Ministers of the UK, Germany, and the EU

British Minister of State for International Development Mr. Alan Duncan paid a three day visit to Bangladesh from 20 June 2011. His visit coincided with the release

of a report in the UK rating Bangladesh as one of the nine "star performers" out of 24 developing countries receiving British aid in funding various development projects. The Overseas Development Institute, released the report entitled "Mapping Progress" on first week of June 2011, where the progress made in Bangladesh's health sector in particular has been cited as one of the developing

world's most significant success stories in the last two decades.



of a report in the UK rating Bangladesh as one of the nine "star performers" out of 24 developing countries receiving British aid in



At the same time took place the visits of German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Mr. Dirk Niebel and the Commissioner for Development Cooperation of the European Union, Mr. Andris Piebalgs to Bangladesh. All these visits demonstrate close ties existing between Bangladesh and Europe and enhanced partnership in international development – particularly in the areas of climate change, governance, and trade. ■

First Textile University inaugurated in Dhaka

The Hon'ble Prime Minister H.E. Sheikh Hasina inaugurated Bangladesh University of Textile (BUT) on 15 March 2011 at Tejgaon. First of its kind in the

country, BUT has emerged as the 34th public university. Previously, it was the College of Textile and Engineering. ■

Bangladesh nominated co-chair of Green Climate Fund



Bangladesh and Sweden have been nominated co-chair of Green Climate Fund. According to the decision taken in the World Climate Conference in Cancun, Mexico in 2010, the first meeting of Transitional Committee was held in

Mexico City on April 28-29 with a view to formulating 'Green Climate Fund'. Four committees were formed in the meeting-Scope and guiding principles, Governance and Institutional arrangements, Operational modalities, Monitoring and Evaluation committee. Bangladesh will work as a co-chair of Monitoring and Evaluation committee. ■

Bangladeshi scientist develops surgical thread from dairy



A Bangladeshi scientist, namely Dr. Azam Ali has developed a fibre from milk protein as medical suture for repairing damaged tissues, cut vessels and surgical incisions in a biodegradable way. The suture that combines a polymer with an easy to extract dairy by-product is more biocompatible than others available now, and hold the potential of

minimizing the use of drugs by patients. Clinical trials on animals have already shown that the fibre can help heal wound in near half the time conventional suture materials do. “A patent application for this has been filed. It (the suture) will go for a human clinical trial soon and, if everything goes smoothly, it will be available commercially within three years,” said Dr. Azam with an interview given to Bangladesh local newspapers. ■

Duty-free access for Bangladesh products into Maldives

The Maldives will allow duty-free access to Bangladesh products, including medicine, from the end of this year. The island nation also agreed to import a large number of workers from Bangladesh. The Maldivian Foreign Minister Ahmed Naseem informed his Bangladeshi counterpart Dr. Dipu Moni, MP in a meeting on 30 May 2011 during his bilateral visit to Bangladesh. Maldives also agreed to improve trade and investment

cooperation with Bangladesh and sought Bangladesh's cooperation in various fields, including health, education and the judiciary. The two Foreign Ministers signed a Memorandum of Understanding on “Placement of Bangladeshi Workers”, which would facilitate Bangladeshi workers in the Maldives in sending remittance, and establish their rights and providing them with other facilities. ■

Zinc-enriched rice by 2013

Bangladesh is set to release in two years a rice variety enriched with zinc which might effectively fight zinc deficiency causing physical and mental problems. The progress made in the experiment was revealed on 11 May 2011 at a national workshop on “Addressing micronutrient malnutrition in Bangladesh: a case of zinc fortified



rice” in Dhaka. The workshop was jointly organized by HarvestPlus (an international research organization), Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) and BRAC. HarvestPlus and BRRI have been conducting the breeding experiment on enhancement of iron and zinc content in rice in Bangladesh since 2005-06. ■

Dhaka approves metro rail route



The Cabinet of Bangladesh approved the metro rail route and the formation of a special project au-

thority for implementation of the estimated US\$ 1.7 b mass transport (metro) network. The metro rail would be setup in two different phases. ■



<http://www.visitbangladesh.gov.bd/>

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Tourism: Destination Khagrachhari

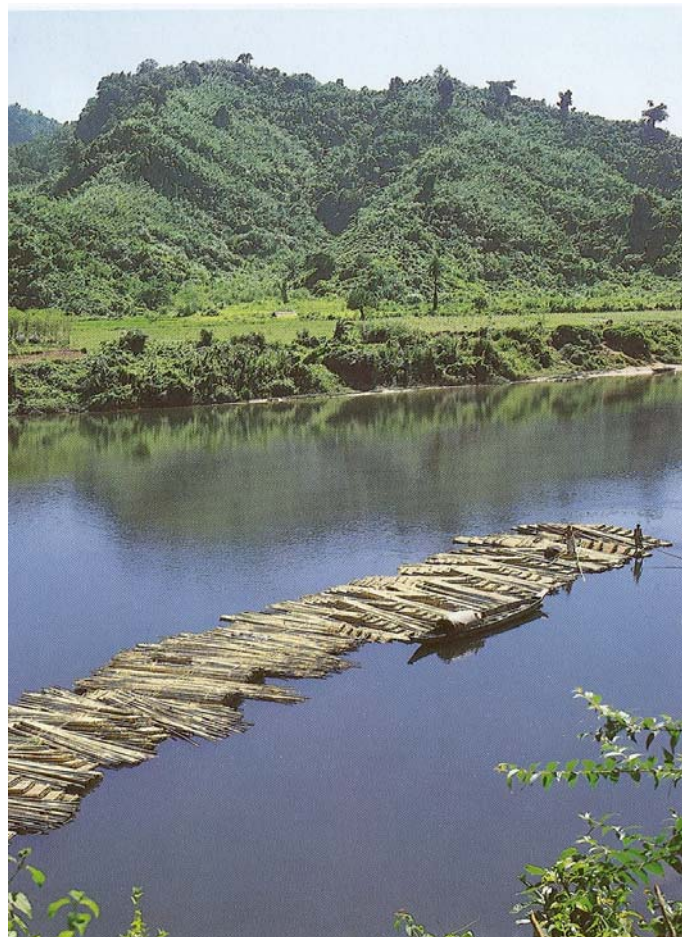
- the charming hill city

Khagrachhari is the administrative headquarters of verdant Khagrachhari Hill District. It is a land of solitude and fascinating beauty. For tourists seeking nature in leisurely restful mood, *Khagrachhari* is an ideal spot. *Khagrachhari* is the natural wild beauty of Bangladesh. The great attraction of *Khagrachhari* - *Alutilla*, surrounded by deep forest, is actually a high hill. There is a natural cave across *Alutilla*, approximately 100 meters long. It is a dark mysterious cave. Torches are available at the top of the hill to go inside the cave through which a hilly stream flows. From the top of *Alutilla*, one can view the whole *Khagrachhari* town at a glance. There is a Watch Tower and a lighthouse on top of the hill. The whole region for its other attractions, life style and festivities is also excellent for ecotourism.

Other attractions:

- *Manikchhari* is the seat of the local *Marma* tribal Chief and the *Rajbari* (palace) of the tribal chief is also worth seeing. The palace contains a bed made of ivory.
- The forest or jungle of *Guimara*, the waterbodies and the hills of *Khagrachhari*, are a feast for the eyes.
- The abandoned *Deeghi* or water tank of former King of *Tripura* at *Deeghinala* is another place to visit.
- At *Ramgarh*, there is a memorial monument of the War of Liberation called "*Sharthok Ejanmo*"
- Old tea garden at *Ramgarh*.
- There is a lake known as *Matai Pukhiri* lake 1500 feet above sea level at *Nunchhari*. Water of this lake never dries up nor does it become dirty. It is therefore called *Matai Pukhiri* or Lake of God.
- A colourful *Biju* (New Year) Festival or water festival is celebrated by the local tribal people every year in April.

Tribal life:



The inhabitants of *Khagrachhari* Hill District are mostly ethnic minorities belonging to different groups like *Tipra*, *Chakma*, *Marma (Mogh)* and *Kuki*. Life of the hilly people is extremely exotic. Majority of them are Buddhists. But there are some Hindu, Christian and Animists as well. Despite their respective traditional religions, elements of primitiveness are strongly displayed in their rites, rituals and everyday life. The families of ethnic minority people are matriarchal. The women-folk are more hardworking than the males and economically they are the main productive force.

Climate:

Mainly three seasons are noticed in *Khagrachhari* - dry season (November to March), relatively cool, sunny and dry, the pre-monsoon season (April ▶▶

Khagrachhari – the charming hill city

► and May) very hot and sunny with occasional shower and the rainy season (June to October), warm, cloudy and wet.

How to Reach & Where to Stay:

A drive of 266 km. from Dhaka and 112 km. from Chittagong by an all-weather metalled road through the hills and green forests takes one to this beautiful picturesque town. Comfortable AC and Non-AC coaches are available from Dhaka to *Khagrachhari* by road via Chittagong. It is also possible to hire a car or microbus from Dhaka to *Khagrachhari*.

By air: Dhaka to Chittagong by air and then from Chittagong to Khagrachhari by road.

By road: Dhaka to Khagrachhari by road via Chittagong.

By train: Dhaka to Chittagong by train and then from Chittagong to Khagrachhari by road.

Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation has modern and luxurious hotel, motel, & cottage accommodation with



Parjatan Motel, Khagrachhari

restaurants, auditoriums, bars, speedboats and other facilities on the bank of the Chengi River at Khagrachhari to offer facilities to tourists.

When to go:

The Winter (Nov-Feb) is the ideal time to visit *Khagrachhari*. This time is very eco-friendly to the visitors. In this period tourist with warm clothes feel convenient to move in and around the hilly region.

What to carry:

In the summer one should carry light clothes and an umbrella or raincoat because it rains quite a lot there.



Lake of God

Also for protection from insects and mosquitoes one can carry insect repellent. While walking into the woods during rainy season, visitors are to be careful about leeches.

Interested tourists may contact Bangladesh Parjatan (Tourism) Corporation for detailed information and package tour with guides about the visits to the Khagrachhari. ■

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

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Nordic agriculture business delegation visits Bangladesh

Ten (10) Danish and three (03) Norwegian companies visited Bangladesh during 8-12 May 2011 in order to access and explore business opportunities and to look for potential Bangladeshi partners in the agriculture industry. The visit was organized under the Danish Business2Business (B2B) program in cooperation with the Royal Danish Embassy in Dhaka. Total 13 Nordic companies had 98 one-to-one meetings with 46 potential Bangladeshi partners. One of the participants of that

delegation, namely Ms. Lone Sarto Pedersen, owner of Sæbeværkstedet, soap manufacturer, came out declaring “we didn’t have that positive an image of Bangladesh as we do now”, and she went on to characterize her meetings with Bangladeshi companies as “really positive, with clever, diligent and inspiring people”. Mr. John Lyneborg Hansen, CEO of World Sea Food, also described the meetings as very fruitful and to praised the quality of the Bangladeshi seafood.

Danish textile companies seek new opportunities in Bangladesh

The Embassy of Denmark in Dhaka along with the Danish Trade Council organized visit of three Danish companies from the textile industry during 22-26 May 2011 in order to look for potential business opportunities in textile sectors. The visiting companies, namely Bruun & Steengade, LS Flag and Nordisk Tekstil, were looking for partners and suppliers of such different products as shirts, bed linen and flags from Bangladesh. The companies had a total of around 32 meetings including 15 factory visits around Dhaka and Chittagong

city. The biggest flag manufacturer in Denmark and supplier to the Royal family in Denmark, LS Flag is an old family company, which is also involved in other Asian countries, such as Vietnam and China. The Design and Innovatoin Director of LS Flag Ms. Chantall Scott especially praised the Bangladeshi companies for their desire to seek common solutions and think innovative. After visiting no less than seven factories, Ms. Scott was very optimistic about a future engagement in Bangladesh. ■

Bangladesh emerges as world's second largest knitwear maker

Bangladesh has become the world's second largest knitwear exporter beating Turkey in terms of volume in 2010, according to the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers & Exporters Association. Bangladesh exported 7.78 billion pieces of knitted items such as T-shirts, sweaters in 2010 against Turkey's shipment of 7.74

billion pieces. Although, in volume wise Bangladesh crossed Turkey, but Turkey is still ahead of Bangladesh in terms of value as they exported knitted clothing worth US\$ 6.92 billion in 2010, compared to Bangladesh's shipment of US\$ 6.19 billion, the sources said. ■

Using solar power in Bangladesh is on the rise

The number of solar home system energy units in Bangladesh has passed the one million mark — the fastest expansion of solar power in the world, according to Bangladesh officials in Infrastructure Development Company Limited (IDCOL). Aided by non-governmental organizations that provide low-cost loans

to install solar panels, Bangladesh’s rural households — most of which are off the electricity grid — have driven a dizzying expansion of solar power in recent years. In 2002, only 7,000 households were using solar panels. By 2014 Bangladeshi officials are aiming to power 2.5 million homes with solar energy. ■



UAE eyes more business with Bangladesh

The Foreign Trade Minister of United Arab Emirates Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi showed interest that the UAE firms would explore business opportunities in agriculture, food processing, hospitality and tourism sector in Bangladesh. She was speaking at a meeting on 5 June 2011 hosted by the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI) in Dhaka. She

remarked that 'Bangladesh was among the 'illustrious' group of 11 3G (Global Growth Generators) countries that had been identified as a 'source of growth potential and profitable investment opportunities'. Bangladesh occupies an 'important position' in the development scheme of things of the United Arab Emirates, according to the UAE Minister. ■

US\$ 1.2 b investment plan proposed in power sector

Thailand has assured Bangladesh of providing all out support in a bid to develop the industrial sector of the country. The Thai Ambassador of Bangladesh Tasanawadee Miancharoen said this while visiting the factory, namely Walton Hi-tech Industries Limited at Chandra in Gazipur, the outskirts of Dhaka, on 31 May 2011. He expressed his country's

interest to invest US\$ 2 billion in the upcoming Dhaka Elevated Expressway project and US\$ 1.2 billion in power sector of Bangladesh. He further mentioned that Thailand would also be keen to invest in the airlines, hotel business, tourism and manufacturing sectors of Bangladesh. ■

Bangladesh receives US\$ 1.25 billion investment plan from Samsung

Samsung, the world's leading electronics producers, proposed Bangladesh with an investment of US\$ 1.25 b for setting up electronics hub in the country. This proposal came while the Managing Director of Samsung visited Bangladesh during May 2011. they sought from Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) to lease 500 industrial plots to set up plants for mobile phone, electric, electronics and home appliance plants and to manufacture computer

accessories and peripherals, air conditioners, mobile, cameras, LED television, refrigerators and microwave ovens in Bangladesh. This proposal is under consideration. Early this year Samsung launched a research and development (R&D) centre in Dhaka. The company has recruited over 100 Bangladeshi engineers to develop mobile devices for Asia, Africa and Australia. Samsung has a plan to hire 1,000 Bangladeshi engineers by 2013. ■

Pottery of Bangladesh

The traditional pottery of Bangladesh is staging a good come back in a new form of design and the industry is regaining its glorious days wooing more and more local and foreign buyers. The pottery goods made of clay, which were on the verge of collapse in Bangladesh about few decades back, are returning in almost every home in the form of decorative show pieces and one can easily find at least some such designer pieces in every house in

Bangladesh. Although, the traditional potters, who were engaged with the profession from generation to generation, almost deserted it as the utensils made of silver and other materials grabbed the market of pottery made utensils. The created potters are also testing different options like making jewelry and crockery items on experimental basis.

Pottery industry in Bangladesh eyed a new ray of hope when the state-owned Bangladesh Small and ▶▶





▶ Cottage Industry Corporation (BSCIC) arranged a fair of pottery items first in 1982 in Dhaka and since then the industry was inching towards the current form. In addition, pottery export from Bangladesh to different countries is on the rise. Private companies in Bangladesh are coming forward to make this industry survive and companies are doing well for exporting their products. Among other private initiatives, a local Bangladeshi company, namely Harappa, started their journey in 2006 with the aim of



revitalizing the traditional pottery industry. Ancient potters of Bangladesh have got thousand years of rich heritage and the mission was to preserve it in a sustainable manner through providing training to our traditional potters, introducing modern technology and making them more market focused. The products of Harappa have already taken a good market share in Bangladesh and now, the company is ready to export. ■

Embassy Activities & Community News

Celebration of the birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation and National Children's Day

The 91st birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and National Children's Day 2011 was celebrated by the Embassy of Bangladesh in Stockholm on 17 March 2011 in a befitting manner with due zeal and enthusiasm. On this occasion, the Mission organized children's art

competition with the theme 'Bangladesh- My Motherland', discussion meeting, and cultural function. A large number of guests from the Bangladesh community attended the program and the event was marked with the presence and participation of a good number of children. ■

Celebration of the Independence and National Day 2011

The 40th Independence and National Day of Bangladesh was celebrated by the Embassy in a befitting manner. The programme started in the morning with hoisting of the national flag. This was followed by a special prayer offered for the salvation of the soul of the Martyrs and for the continued peace and prosperity of Bangladesh. The flag hoisting ceremony was followed by a discussion meeting, chaired by the Ambassador, at the Chancery.



Earlier, in the evening of 24 March 2011 the Embassy arranged a National Day reception at a reception hall located in the Embassy building. The reception hall was

tastefully decorated with flags, stringed colour-lights, Nakshi Kantha, posters, paintings and folios, plants etc. Promotional materials were displayed and documentaries on Bangladesh's history, culture, heritage, tourism prospect, and development activities were shown on big screen TV. Classical music was also played intermittently. The programme was attended by, among others, Hon'ble Speaker of Swedish Parliament, officials of the host government, foreign diplomats, journalists, businessmen, and other dignitaries of the host country and their spouses. A large number of Bangladeshis and Swedish-Bangladeshis from different parts of Sweden also attended the programme enthusiastically. ■

Bangladesh Ambassador Presents Letter of Credence to Denmark



Ambassador Mr. AFM Gousal Azam Sarker presented his credentials to H.M. Queen Margaret II of Denmark on 08

April 2011 as Ambassador of Bangladesh to Denmark. While receiving the credentials, the queen expressed happiness at bilateral relations expanding in wider areas between Bangladesh and Denmark. ■

Celebration of Birth Anniversaries of Bishwakabi Rabindranath Tagore and National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam.

The Embassy celebrated the birth anniversaries of Bishwakabi Rabindranath Tagore and National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam jointly on 29 May 2011. The programme was designed with a mix of discussions and cultural performances (songs, poetry recitations, and dances).

In his speech on the event, the Ambassador gave a brief note on the life and works of Rabindra Nath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam. He said that Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam were the two brightest luminaries in the field of Bangla literature. Pointing out Tagore's unmatched contribution to Bangla literature, he said that with his work, the world came to know how rich and mature our language and literature were. He mentioned that even after 150 years of his birth, appeal of Tagore's works had not faded. He pointed out that the years 2011-2013 were three very important years since these years respectively marked 150th birth anniversary of Tagore, 100th anniversary of English translation of Gitanjalee, and 100th anniversary of winning the Nobel Prize in literature. He also shed some light on Tagore's view of art, unity consciousness, and search for a healthy union of the



East and the West. Tagore as a social reformer, philosopher, institution-builder, scientific minded pioneer, creative educationist, philanthropist, agriculturist etc. were also highlighted. Stressing on the intellect and uniqueness of our National Poet Kazi Narul Islam, the Ambassador mentioned that Nazrul was the only exception in Bangla literary world during the Tagore era who could shine bright out of the shadow of Tagore. He regretted the fact that Nazrul's shortened work life due to his illness had deprived Bangla literature from his abundant creativity and many other masterpieces. He also highlighted Nazrul's philosophy, rebel spirit, inspiration for our liberation, youthfulness, and non-communal stance. Despite the fact that many of Nazrul's impromptu works were lost, number of his works, especially songs were enormous, he added. He singled out Nazrul as the trendsetter of modern Bangla music. Later on guests also joined the discussion. One discussant spoke on Tagore's connection with the Swedish Royal family as Prince Karl Wilhelm Ludvig visited Jorasako in the year 1911 and on return translated Tagore's book in Swedish. He also spoke on Nazrul's popularity. ■

Celebration of Pohela Boishakh (1418)

Pohela Boishakh, 1418, the Bangla Nobo Borsho was celebrated by this Mission on 22 April 2011 in a befitting manner with due colour and festivity. The programme included cultural events and traditional food festival. In the beginning, the Ambassador welcomed all to the celebration and gave a brief history and evolution

of the event and the celebration. Afterwards a cultural programme was presented which included a number of dances, poetry recitations, and songs. A good number of local artists performed in the programme and their lively performance recreated a Bangladesh-like atmosphere. ■

Seminar on Bangladesh at Stockholm Chamber of Commerce

A seminar on 'Bangladesh is open for business - a perfect timing for Swedish export companies!', was organized by a Swedish consulting firm, namely Scoreline AB with active support and guidance by the Embassy held on 14 June 2011 at Stockholm Chamber of Commerce. Swedish business companies and several financing companies & finance-guaranteeing companies participated in the seminar. Bangladesh Ambassador to Sweden was one of the key speakers of the seminar where he presented



facts and figures on Bangladesh and described business and investment environment and opportunities there. He invited the business people. The main focus of the seminar was a possible visit to Bangladesh by a delegation of Swedish companies in clean-tech, sustainable urban development, agro processing etc. sectors that are looking to work in Bangladesh and are in search of local Bangladeshi companies as partners, which might open the door for Bangladesh companies to have a long term business partnership with Swedish companies. ■

COMMUNITY NEWS

Celebration by local Bangladesh communities

One Bangladesh association in Sweden, namely Ruposhi Bangla organized a daylong open-air celebration in Farsta, Stockholm on 25 June 2011 on 'Bangla Naboborsho'. Traditional food and crafts were on display and sale in various stalls.



A well appreciated cultural programme was organized with two promising young Bangladeshi singers in the center and local artists around. Several other organizations in Sweden, namely Dishari Mohila Somiti in Stockholm, Bangladesh Cultural Or-

ganization in Sweden and Association of Bangladeshi Students (ABS), Göteborg organized separates cultural programmes for celebrating Bengali New Year (Pohela Boishakh) in Sweden.



Banglar Mukh, Mölnlycke, a cultural organization, celebrated 150th birth day of the great Bengali poet Rabindra Nath Tagore in Gothenburg which was attended and addressed by the Ambassador of Bangladesh and the Ambassador of India. ■

Research works by Bangladeshi students in Sweden

Ms. Shahina Begum, a Bangladeshi student, has recently finished her doctoral dissertation titled 'A personalised case-based stress diagnosis system using physiological sensor signals' from Mälardalen University in Västerås, Sweden. Her research work mainly investigated artificial intelligence techniques for developing an intelligent, integrated sensor system to establish diagnosis and treatment plans in the psychological domain.

Another Bangladesh born student Mr. Abdel Baten Miaji finished his doctoral dissertation on 'Rural

women in Bangladesh – the legal status of women and the relationship between NGOs and Religious groups' from Lund University, Sweden. His study provides an analytical discussion on the status of rural women in Bangladesh focusing on the legal status, religious practices, and patriarchal social norms in a new era of economic freedom created by micro-credit programmes and government policies along with analysis of the conflict/debate about women and development activities between NGOs and Islamist groups. ■

PAHELA BAISHAKH

- Baishakhi Mela (Baishakhi Fair) : A mirror of Rich Bengali Culture



Fairs are an inseparable part of the traditional culture of the people of Bangladesh. *Pahela*

Baishakh or the Bangla New Year's Day is celebrated in a festive manner in both Bangladesh and the Tripura and West Bengal states of India. In Bangladesh *Pahela Baishakh* is a national holiday, and usually falls on April 14.



Musical function-at dawn at Ramna Park (Chbayanat)

Under the Mughals, agricultural taxes were collected according to the *Hijri* (Arabic) calendar. However, as the *Hijri* calendar is a lunar calendar, it was found that the agricultural tax collection period determined as per the *Hijri* calendar did not mostly coincide with the harvesting season. As a result, farmers were hard-pressed to pay taxes out of season. In order to streamline tax collection, the Mughal Emperor Akbar the great ordered a reform of the calendar. Accordingly, Fatehullah Shirazi, a renowned scholar and astronomer, formulated the Bangla calendar on the basis of the solar year. The new *Fasli San* (agricultural year) was introduced on 10/11 March 1584 AD, but was dated

from Akbar's ascension to the throne in 1556AD. The New Year subsequently became known as the Bengali year.

Celebrations of *Pahela Baishakh* started from Akbar's reign. It was customary to clear up all the annual dues on the last day of Chaitra (last month of the Bengali year or calendar). Following that tradition, in villages, towns and cities, traders and businessmen used to close their old account books and opened new ones (Halkhata). They used to treat their customers with sweets and renewed their business relationship with them. New year's festivals are closely linked with rural life in Bangladesh and the present day celebration of it in the urban areas evoke the memories and practice of that rural life.

On the next day, or the first day of the new year, landlords would entertain their tenants with sweets. On this occasion there used to be fairs and other festivals. In due course the occasion became part of domestic and socio-cultural life and turned into a day of joy and celebration. ▶▶



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► On the day everything is thoroughly scrubbed and cleaned. People bathe early in the morning, dress in fine clothes and then go to visit relatives, friends and neighbours. Special foods are prepared to entertain guests. Baishakhi fairs are held across the country. Various



agricultural products, garden & agro-tools, traditional handicrafts, toys, cosmetics as well as various kinds of food and sweets are sold at these fairs. The fairs also provide entertainment with singers and dancers staging *jatra* (a form of drama), *pala gan*, *kavigan* (songs & ballads), etc. They present folk songs as well as *baul*, *marfati*, *murshidi* (mystic songs). Plays based on folklore, like *Laily-Majnu*, *Yusuf-Zulekha* and *Radha-Krishna* (love-stories based on legends and mythologies) are staged.



Among other attractions at these fairs are puppet shows, streetsides theaters and traditional sports of wrestling and fighting with bamboo sticks.

Nowadays, observance of *Pabela Baishakh* has become popular in the cities too. People gather early in the morning under a big tree or on the bank of a lake or river to witness the sunrise. Artistes and musical groups present songs to welcome the New Year. People from all walks of life wear traditional Bengali dresses: young women wear white sarees with red borders and adorn

themselves with bangles, flowers and 'tip' (also known as 'bindi': i.e. dots between eyebrows). Men wear traditional dress called 'panjabi' & 'pyjama'. Many townspeople start the day with the traditional breakfast of *panta bhat* (cooked rice soaked overnight in water),

green chillies, onion and fried hilsa fish traditionally taken by the farmers.

The most colourful and spectacular takes place in Dhaka, the capital, numbering millions. In the morning under the Banyan Tree at Ramna Park Chhayanat artistes herald the day with Tagore's ritualistic famous song welcoming Baisakh ***Esho he Baishakh esho esho*** (Come, O Baisakh, come).

For the last couple of years, the expatriate Bangladeshis in different countries including Sweden have also been arranging 'Baishakhi fairs' during the month of April and May. Each year, these fairs are enthusiastically visited by men, women and children of Bangladesh origin. Traditional Bangladeshi foods, snacks, sweets, traditional dresses, decoration pieces, ornaments, etc., are sold in these fairs. Cultural functions, featuring dances and songs, are also arranged, besides these fairs to celebrate the Bangla New Year. This year there were four five of such events in Sweden. ■



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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