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**REMARKS BY U.S. AMBASSADOR JAMES F. MORIARTY  
AT THE CLOSING DINNER OF  
AMERICA WEEK 2009 BARISAL  
JANUARY 28, 2009**

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen: Assalam-u-Alaikum and good evening. Thank you for joining us tonight as we officially close America Week 2009 in Barisal. I am pleased to see so many leaders from government, the private sector, non-government organizations, academia and foundations from Bangladesh and the United States.

I would specifically like to recognize the Mayor's participation in this evening's affair. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Mayor for their support over the last three days. Finally, I would like to thank the people of Barisal Division. My Embassy and I have greatly appreciated your warm hospitality.

The theme we chose for this America Week was transitions. We thought that Barisal Division was uniquely situated to highlight this theme. Bangladeshis, including vast numbers from Barisal, voted on December 29 in the most free, fair, and peaceful elections in this country's history. One of the themes we have highlighted this week has been democracy. We celebrated the democratic transitions that have taken place in recent weeks in both of our countries. As we know, however, democracy is more than elections. The active participation of citizens is essential to strengthening democracy in both the United States and Bangladesh.

Barisal also underwent an enormous transition after Cyclone Sidr. The citizens of coastal Bangladesh showed great resilience after the cyclone. This week I was able to visit a number of reconstruction projects underway. I was pleased to be able to visit sites where my government was helping families, businesses, and communities rebuild their lives after the cyclone. We saw consumers finding new sources of renewable energy. We saw people working as catalysts for a greener, cleaner environment. We saw efforts to expand health care options and bring better medical treatment to the region. With

these and other development activities, Barisal is now a stronger, more vibrant community.

Barisal should be proud of another successful transition. My wife and I spoke to the children and young adults of Barisal. They are well equipped and eager to take on the challenges of the future. While my country traces its history back centuries, Bangladesh is still a young nation. One of the hallmarks of this year's elections in both of our countries, however, was the enthusiasm of young voters who were captivated by visions of the future. This is a reminder of the need to leave the world a better place for the next generation.

America Week 2009 has come to a close. But this week is a reminder of the depth of the relationship between our two countries. I know that the friendships made during this week will endure, and the partnership between our two countries will grow even stronger. After a brief hiatus, we were pleased to resume the America Week celebration this year in Barisal. We are already beginning our planning for next year to bring this effort to another corner of your country.

I look forward to continuing partnership in Barisal and in Bangladesh in support of our common goals: democracy, development, and denial of space to extremism. Thank you for joining me this evening. Thank you for celebrating with me this week. And thank you for the contributions each and every one of you made to making America Week in Barisal a success.

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*\*As prepared for delivery*