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**REMARKS BY
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AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY BANGLADESH
CONVOCATION
“A CHALLENGE TO LEAD”**

**BANGLADESH ARMY STADIUM, DHAKA
JANUARY 31, 2013**

The Honorable Minister of Education Nurul Islam Nahid

Vice Chancellor of American International University of Bangladesh Dr. Carmen

Lamagna

Chairman, AIUB Board of Trustees

Members of the faculty and parents

... and, most especially, you, the graduates

This is a great day ... a great day for you, the graduates; you have finished your studies; you are about to graduate; you are ending an important chapter of your life.

Do you know what we call today's event in American English?

We call this a “commencement,” a beginning ... this is the perfect word ...

“commencement.”

You are indeed beginning a new chapter in your life.

Shortly, when you depart from this stadium, you will no longer wear the cloak of student.

When you depart this stadium, you will confront opportunities, opportunities to wrap yourself with a new cloak, a cloak that will define who you are ... and there are so many choices ... so many choices ... so many choices of life ...

But I think you, you the graduates of this wonderful institution, will choose to wrap yourselves in a cloak of greatness, of integrity, of caring about yourself, your family and your community, of building a great nation.

When I speak of this cloak of greatness, I speak of leadership, taking command of your own life.

But what is leadership?

It is not about being in front; it is not about being the loudest; it is not about being right while others are wrong. Leadership begins with yourself ... first lead yourself ... lead yourself to know yourself; lead yourself to respect yourself; lead yourself to be true to yourself; lead yourself to respect others; lead yourself to build and strengthen your family, your community, your nation. As you lead yourself in this fashion, others will follow ... others will follow...

The power of such leadership is truly awesome.

I think of my own hero, American civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., who was one of the most powerful leaders of American history. Yet he did not come from a famous family; he was not a man of wealth; he held no political office. How could such a man manifest such power that he changed the course of American history?

I believe the answer lies in leadership. Martin Luther King's leadership of himself ... his belief in himself, his respect for himself, his being true to himself, his being respectful of others ...

When Martin Luther King's house was bombed, when he himself was attacked, as often he was, he was true to his belief in non-violence, and spoke of love and forgiveness of those who attacked him. Setting aside hate and revenge, he declared, "we are not advocating violence ... we want to love our enemies." In one of the last speeches of his life, he declared that it is not enough to "keep feeling the need for being first, to keep feeling the need for being important." Instead, he said, "I want you to be first in love. I want you to be first in moral excellence. I want you to be first in generosity." Such is the power of leadership of oneself.

As you leave this stadium today, as you shed the used cloak of our student life, I hope you will choose to wrap yourself with the cloak of greatness, of integrity, of caring about yourself, your family and your community, of building a great nation, as I said a moment ago.

Your country needs you; your country needs your strong leadership of self.

I have traveled Bangladesh from Tetulia to Teknaf, from Sylhet to Sunderbans, and everywhere I go, I see the great wealth of this nation ... the fertile soil, ample water, gracious climate that allows for three growing seasons, overflowing bounty of paddy, fruit, vegetables, stacks of fish, chicken and meat, great deposits of natural gas and coal ... and the most precious

blessing of all, the magnificent Bangladeshi people, who are the most energetic, dynamic, creative, generous, entrepreneurial and resilient people I have ever known.

Everywhere I go, I see boundless potential, potential for this country to become a middle-income country, a country where every family has the livelihood and means to have good, secure housing, access to ample, nutritious food, quality healthcare, and good education, a country where no child suffers from stunted physical and mental development.

Your country needs you; your country needs your strong leadership of self.

As I crisscross Bangladesh in fulfillment of my promise to President Zillur Rahman that I would visit all 64 districts, I become ever more convinced that Bangladesh stands ready to be Asia's next tiger, the Royal Bengal Tiger! Indeed our shared vision of Sonar Bangla is not some figment of creative imaginations; it is a vision that could become reality within a decade or so. Bangladesh could be/should be the world's largest exporter of readymade garments, replacing China; Bangladesh could be/should be the world's largest exporter of household textiles, replacing China; Bangladesh could be/should be a major player in exporting small and medium-sized freighters and tugboats, footwear, finished leather goods, generic pharmaceuticals, frozen shrimp, information technology, bone china, jute, silk, and the list goes on.

As Bangladesh's agricultural revolution continues, the country should become food self-sufficient within a decade. Can you imagine this? Once long ago a famous person called Bangladesh an international basketcase ... how strange ... in reality Bangladesh is a strong basket, overflowing with paddy and other riches of the land and sea.

And Bangladesh is yet further blessed by its critical location at the nexus of trade and commerce between South Asia, China and the countries of Southeast Asia ... Burma, Thailand, Singapore and beyond ... Bangladesh is at the heart of the Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor, linking South Asia to the world.

But this vision of Bangladesh as the next Asian Tiger, the Royal Bengal Tiger will not just magically happen ... someone must make it happen ... that someone is you.

Your country needs you; your country needs your strong leadership of self.

Building Sonar Bangla will not be easy ... the challenges are many ... we all know them well ... the challenges of building adequate ports, roads, railroads, of providing adequate energy and power, of reining in corruption, of strengthening rule of law, of sustaining political stability ... these are real challenges, but each can be overcome ... Bangladesh is blessed to have only

problems that can be resolved. I know some countries that are not so lucky, countries that have impossible problems, problems that no one can resolve. But such is not Bangladesh ... each challenge that Bangladesh confronts can be overcome.

But overcoming these challenges will not just happen ... someone must make this happen and that someone is you.

Your country truly needs you ... your country needs your strong leadership.

Life is rich and wondrous ... filled with so many choices. As you today leave behind forever your days of undergraduate level studies, you will depart from this stadium, you will confront a dizzying array of paths, paths of life ... so many choices ... but, as I said when I began my remarks, I am confident that you will choose the path of greatness, the path of strong leadership of self, the path of integrity, of respect and belief in self, in family, in community, in nation.

I believe that you, the graduates of this impressive institution, will choose to build the New Bangladesh, the Middle-Income Bangladesh, the Bangladesh that is Asia's next Tiger, the Royal Bengal Tiger, the Golden Bangladesh.

Yesterday, you, students of AIUB, were called the future leaders of Bangladesh. Today, the day of your graduation, you are the new leaders of Bangladesh, the ones who will build Sonar Bangla.

Thank you.

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**As prepared for delivery*