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**REMARKS  
BY  
U.S. AMBASSADOR DAN MOZENA  
AT THE  
DHAKA UNIVERSITY RICE RESEARCH  
IDEAS EXCHANGE FOR PARTNERSHIP FOR ENHANCED  
ENGAGEMENT IN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

**AUGUST 27, 2013**

Professor Dr. Imdadul Hoque, Dean, Faculty of Biological Sciences

Professor Dr. M. Sayedul Islam, Chairman, Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

Professor Zeba I. Seraj, Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, and organizer of today's program

Learned professors too numerous to mention ... and all of you who, like me, believe that science and research are key to making Bangladesh food secure

Asalaam 'malaikum and good afternoon

A long time ago ...

... in a place far from here ...

... a very famous person described Bangladesh as a "bottomless basket case."

What a strange description of a country ... the most densely populated country in the world aside from some city-states and tiny island countries ... that has become self-sufficient in rice and is on the path to become self-sufficient in food within a decade.

Can you imagine this? A country that is exactly the size of my home state of Iowa with a population equivalent to half that of the United States can feed itself! Who imagined a Bangladesh that is food secure? Twenty years ago, thirty years ago, 42 years ago when Bangladesh joined the international family of nations, did you believe, truly believe that one day you would witness a Bangladesh that was food self-sufficient?

Some call this the miracle of the century.

I do not ...

This once unimaginable progress and the success of Bangladesh's approaching self-sufficiency in food are the result of hard work, creative research, and years of tough slogging ... no miracles ... just lots of sweat, figuratively and literally.

Amazing things have happened and are happening in agricultural research.

I have visited the Bangladesh Agricultural University and the world's second largest collection of germ plasma that is located there; I have visited the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute and the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute, and now the Dhaka University Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology ... at each of these wondrous facilities, I am discovering exciting research of international standard and of global significance.

This research ... this innovative research ... is not simply some theoretical, academic exercise destined to end up forgotten on a dusty shelf some place ... no ... this research is real; this research is practical; this research yields results that Bangladeshi farmers can use ... in their fields.

Research by Bangladeshi scientists and scholars, including you, is producing new, high yielding varieties of rice that are saline resistant, that are drought resistant, that are flood resistant. A couple of days ago, I read of a new rice variety that is enhanced by zinc, a vital micro-nutrient. Other research has produced fruit trees that will begin producing fruit within one year of being planted ... a godsend to villagers in Kurigram and other districts where land and villages are frequently wiped away by massive rivers whose shores are ever shifting. I could go on a long time reciting examples of creative agricultural research in Bangladesh.

Such exciting research ...

You, the scientists, the researchers, the scholars and academics, must be so proud of the work that you have done and the work that you are doing now to help ensure that adequate supplies of safe, nutritious food are available to the people of Bangladesh, even as the population increases over the next forty years before leveling off at about 200 million in the year 2050.

This is a tall order ... but I have every confidence Bangladesh will meet and exceed these challenges.

I am proud that America has been and remains Bangladesh's strong partner in this pursuit of food security. For decades, America has helped to educate Bangladesh's top researchers and scientists, including some of you, and America continues to provide scholarships for Masters and PhD degrees at universities across America. Most recently, one of Professor Zeba Seraj's students received a fellowship to complete her PhD at both the University of Texas and the University of Nebraska.

America has been and remains a strong collaborator with Bangladeshi scientists. A joint USAID and U.S. National Science Foundation grant called “Partnership for Enhanced Engagement in Research” or “PEER” was awarded to Zeba to sustain close collaboration between scientists and researchers in the two countries.

America is also supporting some exciting research in the area of biotechnology. I have seen some of the work being done in Bangladesh to improve eggplant and potato varieties so they are pest-resistant and no longer require the use of pesticides. I know what a difference this kind of technology can make. In Iowa farmers now plant varieties of genetically modified soybeans that are pest-resistant and no longer require the application of pesticides. As farmers eliminated the use of pesticides, the impact on the environment was immediate and huge ... within only a few years, we witnessed on my family’s farms an unimaginable resurgence of natural life ... deer, beavers, coyotes, wild turkeys, eagles, songbirds and others ... that was once extinct in my county ... this surprising rebound of animal life is thanks to the biotech soybeans.

America supported the development of so many new, high-yielding, vigorous and tolerant varieties of rice. Now, America is working in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture under the leadership of Minister Matia Chowdhury to introduce these new varieties and improved agricultural technologies to millions and millions of farmers across southern Bangladesh ... and the results are amazing as crop yields set new records and some areas, such as Barisal, now produce a rice surplus. As rice production per hectare increases, additional land becomes available for producing shrimp, fish and vegetables ... all badly needed to better balance the Bangladeshi diet, which is especially important for children.

But we must not become complacent.

The challenges to Bangladesh’s agriculture are real and threatening. As a result of global climate change, sea levels are rising; salinity is on the march, penetrating more deeply into the interior of the country; seasons are becoming less distinct and less predictable; and weather extremes such as drought and flood threaten to become more common.

The northward march of salinity is hastened by the rapid depletion of Bangladesh’s underground water supplies ... and urbanization destroys many square kilometers of farmland each year.

Given these new challenges, you ... scientists, researchers, academics ... have good job security. You have lots of work to do to ensure that Bangladesh becomes and remains food secure, to ensure that those who once described Bangladesh as a bottomless basket are forever proven wrong as Bangladesh becomes an overflowing basket of agricultural bounty.

Thank you.

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*\*As prepared for delivery.*