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**REMARKS
BY
U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA**

**AMERICAN ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
AWARDS DINNER**

**Westin Hotel, Dhaka
July 6, 2013**

Dr. Gowher Rizvi, Honorable Advisor to the Prime Minister for International Affairs

Dr. Kamal Hossain, President , Gono Forum

Barrister Moudud Ahmed, MP

Hashem Khan, Artist

Ms. Rokia Afzal Rahman, former Advisor to the Caretaker Government

Professor Zamilur Reza Chowdhury, former Advisor to the Caretaker Government

Sadat Hossain, Former Chairman, Public Service Commission

... my, I could go and on, but I had best stop or I will lose all of my time ... so let me simply acknowledge all of the alumni of education in America

Asalaam 'malaikum and good evening

Now I am starting to understand ...

This morning I was so confused ... I met with hundreds of young Bangladeshis, all getting ready to take off for America to begin their undergraduate or graduate studies ... as I looked out upon that sea of eager faces, I noticed that they all seemed so familiar to me, as if I had already met them .

And now that I am with you, the alumni, I understand what happened earlier today ... I must have been in a time machine or something because those young faces were your faces, you maybe two years ago; you a decade ago; you 25 years ago ... those budding students I met with

this morning were you some years ago ... or at least just like you were as you prepared to take off for America.

I told those young new students that two years from now, four years from now, maybe more, they would be back in Bangladesh and they would be part of the American alumni here. I predicted that after their return they would be busy, so busy building the New Bangladesh, the Bangladesh where all have the means to provide their families safe, secure housing, ample, nutritious diets, good healthcare and quality education.

In other words, they would be just like you ... you, the great builders of Bangladesh; you, the great creators of the next Asian Tiger.

I am often asked whether I truly believe that Bangladesh can be the next Asian Tiger. The answer is unequivocally “yes!” I believe that Bangladesh could be/should be the next Asian Tiger.

For starters, the country is rich, truly blessed: fertile soil, ample water, great climate for multiple growing seasons, huge deposits of clean coal, great reserves of natural gas, and the list goes on, but, of course, God’s greatest gift to Bangladesh is the extraordinary people of the nation, -- the most energetic, dynamic, creative, generous, optimistic, entrepreneurial, resilient people I know.

The Asian Tiger of my vision would have Bangladesh as the world’s largest exporter of readymade garments, replacing China; the world’s largest exporter of household textiles, replacing China; a major global player in exporting generic pharmaceutical products, shoes, finished leather goods, frozen shrimp, small freighters and tugboats, IT software and processing, jute products, silk products, bone china, flowers to the Middle East, and the list goes on and on.

The Asian Tiger of my vision would capitalize on its geographic location at the crossroads of South Asia and East Asia, the very nexus of the Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor, the great trade avenue of the 21st century.

The Asian Tiger of my vision would undertake a great revolution in education and skills training, so the nation could provide highly educated, skilled and semi-skilled manpower to build the economies of the Middle East, Southeast Asia and East Asia, as well as Bangladesh itself.

The Asian Tiger of my vision would continue the great agricultural revolution now underway in Bangladesh, which has already made Bangladesh self-sufficient in rice and will within the decade make the nation food self-sufficient ... can you imagine this? Bangladesh, the

most densely populated country in the world aside from tiny city states and island nations; Bangladesh, once famously described as an international basket case ... that very Bangladesh is now rice self-sufficient ... wow ... be impressed!

My vision of Bangladesh as the next Asian Tiger is not some mythical creation of an imaginative ambassador. Indeed, I have seen the makings of a future Asian Tiger myself as I have crisscrossed Bangladesh from Tetulia to Teknaf, from Sylhet to Satkhira, discovering the economic vitality of the farms, fisheries, villages, cities and factories of Bangladesh. Others, too, have discovered the great potential of Bangladesh: McKinsey Reports, Goldman Sachs, Standard and Poor's ... all have labeled Bangladesh as an emerging economy.

I am pleased/I am proud that America is Bangladesh's strong partner as Bangladesh endeavors to become the next Asian tiger. America is the single largest investor in Bangladesh, the single largest market for Bangladeshi exports, and the third largest source of remittances. And America is Bangladesh's steadfast partner in so many fields, ranging from health and food security to democracy and governance to border security and disaster preparedness. You, the American alumni, have played an important role in building all of these linkages.

Of course, you know and I know that the challenges are real ... challenges of infrastructure such as inadequate ports, roads, railroads; challenges of shortages of energy and power; challenges of corruption, deficient rule of law, and the specter of political instability. These are serious challenges, none can doubt, but each of them is resolvable if there is the political will to do so.

Challenges such as these are resolvable, but they don't simply resolve themselves; someone resolves them. Asian tigers don't just happen; someone makes them happen. That "someone" is you. You, the alumni of American education, some of the best education in the world, you are the "someone's" who are making the vision of Bangladesh as the next Asian Tiger a reality. I am so gratified to see your American education put to such good work.

I would like to close with a word of appreciation ... to the American Alumni Association for your help in recruiting top-notch Bangladeshi students to study in the U.S. Last year Bangladesh had the fastest growth rate of any country in the region in terms of the number of students studying in the U.S. My goal is to expand the current number of Bangladeshi students in the U.S. ten-fold. We need your continued help to make this vision reality as well.

Congratulations to all of tonight's award winners... and congratulations and thank you to all American alumni for your continuing success in making Sonar Bangla reality.

Thank you.



**As prepared for delivery*