

**EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION**

TEL: 880-2-883-7150-4

FAX: 880-2-9881677, 9885688

E-MAIL: [DhakaPA@state.gov](mailto:DhakaPA@state.gov)

WEBSITE: <http://dhaka.usembassy.gov>



**REMARKS**

by

**U.S. AMBASSADOR DAN MOZENA  
A PARTNERSHIP AMONG USAID, VOICE OF AMERICA  
AND DESH TV  
INAUGURAL AIRING OF PUBLIC HEALTH EPISODES –  
JIBONER GOLPO**

**MEET THE PRESS  
WESTIN HOTEL, DHAKA  
JUNE 27, 2013**

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, MP, Chairman, Desh TV

Asaduzzaman Nur, MP, Managing Director, Desh TV

Arif Hassan, Deputy Managing Director, Desh TV

Ms. Roquia Haider, Chief of VOA Bangla Service

Mr. Richard Greene, Mission Director, USAID/Bangladesh

Asalaam ‘malaikum and good afternoon.

Forty-one ... I hate the number 41 ... I have deep disdain for this number ... 41 is a horrible number ... it is the worst number of all in Bangladesh ... I wish it would go away and never come back.

Forty-one ... forty-one ... is the percentage of Bangladeshi children under five whose physical or mental development is stunted for want of proper nutrition ... forty-one percent.

Perhaps, now you, too, will join me in loathing this number.

By all rights, this number should be zero ... zero Bangladeshi children need be stunted due to poor nutrition.

After all, Bangladesh is not a poor country; it is a rich country blessed with fertile soil, ample water, three growing seasons, natural gas, coal and other resources, and the best .... the very best

people in the world ... the most energetic, dynamic, creative, generous, entrepreneurial, and resilient people of all. Although the most densely populated country in the world, Bangladesh is already rice self-sufficient and within a decade should be food self-sufficient. Imagine that ... this country once labeled an international basket case ... is now nearly food self-sufficient. Be pleased; be proud ... it is an amazing achievement for the government and people of Bangladesh.

So, if this country is so richly blessed, then why are 41% of the children stunted in their physical and mental development?

The answer is simple: Lack of knowledge; lack of understanding, parents not knowing how to provide children a balanced diet with proper nutrition; lack of understanding about how to raise strong, healthy families. Lack of knowledge combined with poverty add up to 41 percent of Bangladeshi children suffering from poor nutrition.

I am pleased that Bangladesh is making good, steady progress in fighting poverty ... but that is only half of the battle ... in some ways that is the easy part.

Much more challenging will be changing eating habits, nutrition habits ... these food habits, this fixation with eating mountains of rice and little else, these traditions are millennia old and are deeply ingrained, even when mothers seek to diversify the diet, their husbands reject this, wanting to stick with old habits ... challenging such traditions, as experience in America and around the world has shown, is tough, really, really tough .... but it can be done.

... and that is why this event today is so important.

Today we mark an historic partnership of Bangladesh, USAID, the Voice of America (VOA) and Desh TV ... a partnership to bring knowledge, nutrition knowledge, health knowledge to the people of Bangladesh.

A famous person once remarked, "Knowledge is power." Indeed, knowledge can be the driver of change. In this case, knowledge can be the engine that will take Bangladesh ever forward on achieving its Millennium Development Goals, on advancing further the health and well-being of the people of this great nation.

As we have heard, this partnership ... America, Bangladesh, and the private sector's Desh TV ... will bring into the homes of millions of Bangladeshis around the nation valuable lessons on how families can be strong and healthy. Most important will be teaching parents, including especially the fathers, the importance of changing age-old eating habits to introduce greater nutritional variety into the diet. Other critical lessons will focus on clean water, combating infectious disease, special care for pregnant mothers, newborns, and small children, and the list goes on.

You get the idea.

The concept is simple: effecting fundamental change of nutrition and health ... at the grass roots. This three year, \$200,000 partnership between America, Bangladesh and Desh TV is a

huge first step on the long road of bringing knowledge, that great driver of change, into the homes of the Bangladeshi people.

I am so proud that America is partnering with Bangladesh and Desh TV to help Bangladesh march resolutely forward on the road to wholesome nutrition and good health for all Bangladeshis. This is no pipedream ... Bangladesh is already a model to the world on improving the quality of health for its people ... and now Bangladesh through the media, through this innovative partnership between VOA and Desh TV and the Government of Bangladesh will show the world another powerful lesson on health and nutrition: Knowledge is indeed power ... and creative use of the media can bring that knowledge, that power into homes of millions of Bangladeshis. I believe this partnership will create huge opportunities to bring better nutrition, better health to the Bangladeshi people.

The wonderful people of Bangladesh deserve nothing less.

Thank you.

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*\*As prepared for delivery\**