

# EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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## Ambassador Dan Mozena

### Radio Today

Dhaka, Bangladesh

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**Radio Today:** A very warm welcome to America, the dream country brought to you by Radio Today, 89.6 FM.

We are at that time of year when we do both, a very special time of year when we look back and we look ahead. We look back to the year 2013 that's nearly gone and we look ahead to 2014. So this is really a special time of year, and to make this memorable, we have for our listeners the presence of the Honorable Ambassador of the United States to Bangladesh, His Excellency Dan Mozena.

Excellency, welcome back to the Radio Today studios. Welcome to the show. America the dream country. And congratulations on completing your second year as U.S. Ambassador to Bangladesh.

**Ambassador Mozena:** Nafeez, thank you very much. It's a great, great pleasure to be back here with you. It's exciting. I look forward to our conversation as we look back over a very transformative year. If I had to pick one word, this was a year of transformation. And as we look forward, I see more transformation.

**Radio Today:** Excellency, we want to do just that, look back at 2013 in retrospect and the prospects for 2014. So much has happened. There have been so many things going on, as you say. How would you describe 2013?

**Ambassador Mozena:** Oh, my. That's a great question. Where to start?

It has been a tremendous year for America's relationship, for America's partnership with Bangladesh.

Our Partnership Dialogue, for example, we had the second session of the Partnership Dialogue. We had the second session of the Security Dialogue. We had the second session of the Mil-Mil Talks. We signed the CT MOU. We signed the Drug Enforcement MOU. But the biggest thing, Nafeez, the biggest thing of all is the effort underway right now to transform the ready-made garment sector so there never ever again is another Rana Plaza building collapse ... never ever again another Tazreen Fashions fire disaster. And to me, I think that's the biggest thing coming

out of 2013 because I believe the apparel sector of Bangladesh is going to transform itself and become a preferred brand in the global marketplace. It will become number one.

**Radio Today:** I really appreciate your optimism doing this.

But the question on people's minds paradoxically is how does the withdrawal of GSP help?

**Ambassador Mozena:** Well, I think the action that President Obama took on June 27<sup>th</sup> to suspend Bangladesh's GSP (Generalized System of Preferences) benefits in America is the drive, the engine, the stimulus for transforming the sector.

**Radio Today:** I agree with you fully, because that's one of the ways that I look at it. It's like a wakeup call. All compliance ratings are, whether industrial compliance or social compliance.

But is the United States going to help the ready-made garment industry, the producers in this country, to become compliant?

**Ambassador Mozena:** We are already deeply engaged, and tomorrow, for example, there will be another meeting with the government of Bangladesh and with a number of ambassadors representing the market, and forging a way forward to deal with the issues that must be resolved so that Bangladesh becomes a preferred brand in the global marketplace.

**Radio Today:** And Excellency, our listeners have one question on their minds that I have to ask you this. What are your thoughts on the present situation in Bangladesh? We have seen your efforts, your inputs to bring peace to this country and we appreciate that.

In view of those inputs and efforts, what do you think about the present situation in Bangladesh?  
Where do we stand?

**Ambassador Mozena:** America and Bangladesh's many other friends are all working together to support the process, the democratic process in Bangladesh. But at the end of the day, at the end of the day only the Bangladeshis themselves can find a way forward. And that's why it's more important now than ever before that the two parties engage in constructive dialogue to find an agreed way forward to hold elections that are free and fair and credible in the eyes of the people of Bangladesh.

**Radio Today:** And participatory as well.

**Ambassador Mozena:** And in this context it's extremely important that all sides respect that violence is not part of the democratic process. Violence is unacceptable and violence must stop and must stop now.

I want to add that it is the responsibility of the government to provide space, political space, to the opposition so they can freely and peacefully present their views, and it is the responsibility of the opposition to use that space responsibly, peacefully.

**Radio Today:** Absolutely. And everybody is wondering what's going to happen next. Is your crystal ball any clearer than ours?

**Ambassador Mozena:** Oh, if only I had a crystal ball. I don't. But I do know this. I do know this. The next step is for the two parties to engage, to continue the dialogue that started under Oscar Fernandez Taranco.

**Radio Today:** Will there be a continued supportive effort from the U.S. side?

**Ambassador Mozena:** Yes. America stands by Bangladesh and we support whatever the two parties come up with as a way to hold free and fair elections that are credible to the people of Bangladesh.

**Radio Today:** Ambassador, I've heard you say many times, Shonar Bangla. I think that's a positive way of looking at Bangladesh. What makes you positive about Bangladesh?

**Ambassador Mozena:** Oh, my goodness. I travel and travel and travel across this country from Sylhet to Shatkhira, from Tetulia to Teknaf and so many places in between. And as I travel I see

the wealth of Bangladesh. As I see the wealth of this country, I see that this country should be, could be the number one exporter of ready-made garments in the world ... the number one exporter of household textiles in the world replacing China. I see that Bangladesh could be a major global player in generic pharmaceutical production, shoes -- world-class shoes, finished leather goods, information technology, frozen fish, frozen shrimp, bone china small freighters, ocean-going tugboats, flowers, jute, silk ...and the list goes on and on. All these things I have seen, I have visited, and I have learned about. These things would create Bangladesh, Bangladesh, the next Asian Tiger.

I see a Bangladesh that would use its strategic geographic location as a nexus for the Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor, linking Central Asia, South Asia with China, with Singapore, with the world. And Bangladesh would be the nexus. And Bangladesh would contribute enormously to the flow of trade through the Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor.

So I see a Bangladesh where an agricultural revolution continues to contribute to Shonar Bangla.

Think of this, Bangladesh, the most densely populated country in the world, food self-sufficient. I see Bangladesh as a source of skilled manpower. Not unskilled labor like today. But I see millions and millions of skilled Bangladeshis -- doctors, professors, scientists, carpenters, electricians, plumbers, building the Middle East, building Southeast Asia, building Bangladesh. That's part of Shonar Bangla.

**Radio Today:** Thank you, Excellency. We have to go on a break, but when we come back from the break we'd like to continue to talk about agriculture and agricultural workers a little bit, get some of your insights. Because I do know that USAID is supporting our agricultural efforts.

[Break].

Excellency, we were on agriculture. There must be lots of parts in the world where they are short of agricultural workers and skilled agricultural workers. As you travel, like you say, from Tetulia to Teknaf, you do know we have a lot of agricultural workers, but maybe they need to add some skills and I think USAID has some interventions in the area of agriculture.

**Ambassador Mozena:** Oh, Nafeez, this is a major area of partnership between America and Bangladesh. And we are working with Bangladeshi farmers to help them introduce new technology. For example in southern Bangladesh, Khulna and Barisal Divisions, we are working with farmers on how to use fertilizer more effectively. So we have developed what's called Guti Fertilizer. It's like a tablet of fertilizer. When a farmer uses that he reduces the amount of fertilizer he needs by 25 percent and increases yield by more than 25.

**Radio Today:** Do you think in addition to that if you had the skills for doing mechanized farming and doing agricultural [training], stuff like that, that our agricultural workers could also find agricultural work in parts of the world where they need agricultural workers?

**Ambassador Mozena:** Actually Bangladesh needs to keep its agricultural workers here because sometimes there's a shortage of agricultural workers in Bangladesh. And what you see in Bangladesh is actually a high degree of mechanization being used in agricultural areas. That's why Bangladesh is able to increase food production so much. That's why Barisal, for example, has become a rice surplus area. We have three million farmers who are using this new technology. What a success.

**Radio Today:** Thank you for mentioning that because a lot of our listeners are in the rural areas and from the rural areas, and those farmers who are not already getting the benefit of it I think will reach out for it.

You've said on the Vision 2021 Plan Bangladesh is committed to becoming what we call a middle income country. That would be maybe by the 50<sup>th</sup> year of our independence which is 2021. So you seem very optimistic. Do you think we'll really get there?

**Ambassador Mozena:** Well, I don't know about 2021. But when I think of Bangladesh as a middle income country, it's not in some statistical sense. I think a middle income Bangladesh is where everyone has the means to provide his or her family good housing, ample, nutritious food, good health care and quality education, and I certainly see that as very feasible.

This is a rich country. It has rich soil, ample water, perfect growing season. It has coal. It has natural gas. And it has the best, the best, the best people, the toughest, hardest working, most

creative, most generous, most resilient, most entrepreneurial people I know. That is what will make this a middle income country.

**Radio Today:** We have an American English course running at the Radio Today Media Academy the Consul General of the visa consular section. Mr. Jamie Fouss was here. He was talking about visas for a good three hours. He told the class that we have an Ambassador who loves the people of this country, and I can see that.

Ambassador, climate change. We in Bangladesh feel that we are on the suffering end of the climate change and what is going on. So this is an important initiative for the U.S. government also. What is it doing in Bangladesh about global climate change, addressing, mitigating, et cetera?

**Ambassador Mozena:** Bangladesh truly is one of the countries most impacted by climate change. But it also is a global leader in the world community to mitigate for and adapt to the impacts of global climate change. So we're very involved in helping Bangladesh cope with the impact of global climate change.

For example, we have helped with the development of saline tolerant strands of rice. Now 700,000 Bangladeshi farmers are using saline tolerant rice varieties so they can keep producing large crops of rice even with increased salinization.

**Radio Today:** Can you tell us a little more about your Feed the Future programs in Bangladesh?

**Ambassador Mozena:** Well, Feed the Future is one of President Obama's major global initiatives, and Bangladesh is one of the focus countries for that special program.

It's really an exciting program. It has three phases. The first is to increase agricultural production, which is already happening as we discussed a momenta go. The second is to increase the ability of families to acquire food, to buy food. The third is to help mothers prepare more nutritious food for their families.

**Radio Today:** Excellency, we saw that the U.S. provided a ship to the Bangladesh Navy.

Would you like to tell us a little more about the ship that you've given us. Is it state of the art?

Does it have state of the art weaponry? What kind of defenses and/or defensive capabilities does it have, et cetera? People are really interested.

**Ambassador Mozena:** Oh, this ship, I was in Chittagong on December 13 when it arrived on its voyage from California, and I went back to Chittagong on December 23 with the President to commission the new ship. It's a splendid vessel. It is the largest ship in the Navy of Bangladesh ... 378 feet long. This ship will enable Bangladesh to have more effective control of its maritime borders and maritime waters. The ship will help Bangladesh protect itself against trafficking of drugs, trafficking of people, trafficking of arms, against piracy, against terrorism, against people

stealing your fish. And I hope someday there will be gas maybe in the bay and you need to defend that as well.

**Radio Today:** Now that you mention gas, that takes us to the energy sector. Excellency, what is the United States doing to improve the energy sector in this country, export its resources better?

**Ambassador Mozena:** Well, you may know that the United States is the largest investor in Bangladesh, and much of that investment has gone into the exploration for gas and the production of gas. That has been done through private companies -- Chevron, Conoco Phillips, Halliburton, and others.

**Radio Today:** Chevron and Conoco Phillips, companies like that, international companies, obviously they'll be looking at their commercial interests. But as far as the transfer of technology is concerned, is that happening? And how is that happening?

**Ambassador Mozena:** Of course those two companies work directly with Petro-Bangla. But on another front there's tremendous work being done in a program that's just being launched now. It's called Sustainable Energy For All. This program will focus on bringing energy to people who are not on the grid. This program will focus on energy efficiency, so less energy is lost. This program will focus on renewable energy like wind power and solar power. It also will work with improved cook stoves to help village people have cook stoves that use less fuel and produce less indoor pollution.

**Radio Today:** Excellency, we know that countries like Holland, Germany and of course the United States have this huge lead in solar energy and wind energy. Can you tell us about some of that technology? Some of those innovations being brought to Bangladesh? They're very expensive.

**Ambassador Mozena:** Very exciting things are happening in Bangladesh as it relates to mini solar-powered energy systems and micro-solar powered energy systems. This is cutting edge stuff being developed in Bangladesh and will be implemented in Bangladesh and will be a model.

Bangladesh is a pilot country for the Sustainable Energy For All initiative, so these ideas being developed here will have global implications.

**Radio Today:** That's great to know.

Excellency, the American embassy supports several youth-focused initiatives including the Edward M. Kennedy Center for Public Service and the Arts. Would you tell us a little bit about the EMK Center and its programs?

**Ambassador Mozena:** Oh, my. We just celebrated the one year anniversary of the Edward M. Kennedy Center for Public Service and the Arts. And what a first year it has been. More than 60,000 young people have been there in over a thousand different programs.

**Radio Today:** What are these programs like?

**Ambassador Mozena:** So many different areas: some on human rights, some with empowerment of women, and a major emphasis on entrepreneurial development.

We've just launched a new initiative from the Edward M. Kennedy Center called the Entrepreneurship Initiative, and it's reaching out and connecting with young Bangladeshi entrepreneurs, helping them develop the capacity to create their businesses ... helping them connect with Bangladeshi-Americans for mentoring ... helping them learn how to raise finances they need to launch their new business ... helping them learn how to market, how to develop a market, how to advertise ... so many different areas.

Bangladeshis are by nature so entrepreneurial and we're trying to link them with their American mentors.

**Radio Today:** We all like to feel, think proudly of the Bangladeshi-Americans, and connecting the Bangladeshis here with the Bangladeshi-Americans is really a great idea.

How else is the embassy engaging Bangladeshi-Americans?

**Ambassador Mozena:** Oh, the Diaspora is a major focus of my engagement with Bangladesh. When I go to America I hunt down the communities in Washington, DC, New York --

**Radio Today:** Michigan.

**Ambassador Mozena:** Most recently Michigan, you're right. And Portland, Oregon; and San Francisco; and Silicon Valley; and Los Angeles; and --

**Radio Today:** -- happy there?

**Ambassador Mozena:** Well, I want to finish this point. In Michigan we launched a new program called LiftBangla. Go to [LiftBangla.org](http://LiftBangla.org). This is a portal by which Bangladeshi-Americans can contribute money, resources, to NGOs and other agencies in Bangladesh to do all sorts of good things and know that the money will not be stolen and that it will be put to good use, documented use, that a report will be provided.

**Radio Today:** And as you travel across the U.S. and meet Bangladeshi-Americans, what are they telling you?

**Ambassador Mozena:** Well, they all have American passports, but the first generation's hearts are always in Bangladesh. And they want to give back to Bangladesh. We're helping them through this portal called LiftBangla. We're helping them through the entrepreneurship initiative, which will link Bangladeshi-American businessmen with young Bangladeshi mentors. So we're helping build these linkages.

**Radio Today:** We've seen an increase in the number of students studying in the U.S. I've been told that you keep saying issue more student visas. Why do you say that?

**Ambassador Mozena:** Well, last year, 2012, there were 3,348 Bangladeshis studying in the United States.

**Radio Today:** An exact number.

**Ambassador Mozena:** That is nothing. And my goal is to have 33,480 Bangladeshis studying in the United States. That's my goal. And so we are working very hard to increase the number.

This year we went up 15 percent, so we're on track to have about 10,000 Bangladeshis studying in America. And that's good but not good enough. I want 33,480.

**Radio Today:** I'm sure we'll get there, because there are a lot of Bangladeshis, people with adequate skills, with specific skills, very intelligence, very competent. I'm sure they can go out

to the U.S. and do their degrees, come back and contribute to the development of Bangladesh. It's really important because you have all these centers of excellence in the universities of the United States.

**Ambassador Mozena:** I just want to say on that that young people should explore how to study in America. Come to the American Center or the EMK Center, go to the U.S. embassy web site and find out about Education USA. Visas are available for bonafide students. Financial assistance is available for people who go online and find it.

**Radio Today:** Excellency, you have a Facebook page, I think it's [www.Facebook.com/Bangladesh.embassy](http://www.Facebook.com/Bangladesh.embassy). Is that correct?

**Ambassador Mozena:** Actually it's [www.Facebook.com/Bangladesh.USEmbassy](http://www.Facebook.com/Bangladesh.USEmbassy). And yes, that is our Facebook. I go on Facebook about every other week.

**Radio Today:** On a personal note, Excellency, we have heard that you have just become a grandparent, and I've heard that grandparents are the best toys in the hands of grandchildren, and you're so far away. How does it work out for you?

**Ambassador Mozena:** Well, I am a new grandpa for the first time. My granddaughter was born five weeks ago. And I have not yet seen my granddaughter in person, but I Skype with her twice a day. She's not the best conversationalist. [Laughter].

**Radio Today:** Not yet.

**Ambassador Mozena:** But we have a good time.

**Radio Today:** The holiday season, as you live far away from home and family, how do you and others at the embassy celebrate Christmas or the New Year?

**Ambassador Mozena:** Well, in my family Christmas is an extremely important holiday, and first of all we set up a very large Christmas tree. It's about 12 feet high. We decorate it with lights and all sorts of decorations. Every bulb that we hang on that tree tells a story. I hang three bulbs on that tree that my mother, 90 years ago, hung on her tree when she was a little girl. And these bulbs were old then. They were from her grandparents.

**Radio Today:** If you can get your granddaughter to hang onto these they'll have antique value.

**Ambassador Mozena:** They have sentimental value. I don't worry about antique value.

**Voice:** [Inaudible].

**Radio Today:** I'm sure that's absolutely right.

Excellency, do you have any other message for our listeners? Please.

**Ambassador Mozena:** Well, I just want to thank Bangladesh. I have finished my first two years as Ambassador to Bangladesh.

**Radio Today:** I'm so glad that you have.

**Ambassador Mozena:** Thank you. It's been such an incredibly rich experience. And all because of the people of Bangladesh who have been so warm, so welcoming, such great partners in working together.

**Radio Today:** That nearly brings us to the end of our program. Thank you, Excellency for being here with us, with our listeners. I'm sure they're mighty pleased, and we do know that this is going to be on your Facebook page as well so that people can log onto your Facebook page and listen to this talk which we've had here.

Thank you for being with us and we look forward to your coming back again to talk to our listeners in 2014. Have a great New Year, Excellency, and Happy New Year to our listeners as well.

**Ambassador Mozena:** Thank you very much, Nafeez. It's been great chatting with you. I look forward to the next time. And I wish all of your listeners and, most especially, I wish Bangladesh a very, very wonderful 2014.

**Radio Today:** Thank you, Excellency. Thank you for being such a good friend of Bangladesh.

**Ambassador Mozena:** Thank you.

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