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REMARKS BY

**U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA
DHAKA WANGALA
BANANI BIDYANIKETAN HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE
OCTOBER 18, 2013**

The Honorable Minister of Food, Dr. Muhammad Abdur Razzaque, MP, who introduced me to his region of Tangail and the Mandi people who live there

Professor Dr. Manas Kumar Chowdhury, Jahangirnagar University

Lt. Col. (Retired) Mohammad Bashiruddin, Principal, Banani Bidyaniketan School and College

... and all of the Mandi people and the many friends of the Mandi people who are gathered here today to join this wonderful celebration of Dhaka Wangala

Asalaam 'malaikum, good afternoon ... and yeshu narashong, kachibegipa Wangala!

Some people say life is very complicated ...

But I believe the essence of life is quite simple.

I believe that fundamentally each of us ... Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian or follower of other religions ... each of us ... Bengali, Mandi, other indigenous group, westerner ... each of us wants the same thing.

I believe that each of us wants simply to live in peace and harmony as we pursue a good quality of life for ourselves and a better quality of life for our children.

Nothing more, nothing less ... we want simply to live in peace and harmony so we can build a good life for ourselves and our families.

As I travel across Bangladesh from Tetulia to Teknaf, from Sylhet to Satkhira, I feast on the rich diversity of the people and cultures of Bangladesh.

As I travel across this great nation, I see how Bangladeshis of different religions, different cultures, different ethnicities live side by side in peace and harmony as they have done for many years.

That is the deepest beauty of Bangladesh ...

That is the greatest wonder of Bangladesh ...

Bangladesh is a moderate, tolerant, secular nation, accepting of religious differences, accepting of ethnic differences ...

... a nation where neighbors of different ethnic groups and religions can join in celebrating each other's holidays and feast days.

We all know, however, that sometimes this peace and harmony is disrupted by tensions or violence among ethnic groups and between followers of different religions.

Such tension and violence are not in character with the spirit of Bangladesh ... a spirit of tolerance, moderation, acceptance ... a spirit that reflects the Bangladeshi tradition of living in peace and harmony.

As the nation celebrates Eid-ul-Azha, Durga Puja and now Wangala, this is a time of peace ...

... this is the perfect time for all to resolve to solve differences amicably, peacefully, without violence, intimidation, and fear.

I hope that this festive season will mark a recommitment to Bangladesh's wondrous heritage of all Bangladeshis ... proud Bangladeshis ... living side by side in peace and harmony.

In respecting its ethnic and religious minorities, Bangladesh is truly protecting and preserving the core principles upon which this nation was founded over four decades ago.

I believe the nation will strengthen its long and proud tradition of tolerance and acceptance of religious and ethnic differences.

I believe such tolerance and acceptance define what it means to be a Bangladeshi.

Certainly the Bangladesh I know and love so much is a Bangladesh that cherishes and protects the rights and well-being of all of its citizens, including the minorities.

I believe that we ... all of us ... Bangalis, Mandi, other ethnic groups, and foreigners ... all of us ... Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, or followers of other religions ... all of us ... must love and respect each other, regardless of religious, ethnic or other differences.

I believe that Bangladesh will continue to stand proudly on the global stage as a wondrous example of how people, regardless of differences, can live together in peace and harmony as they pursue their shared visions of building good lives for themselves and even better lives for their children.

Thank you.

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**Prepared for delivery*