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REMARKS BY
U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA
AT THE
ACCESS TO INFORMATION PROGRAM
SERVICE INNOVATION FUND AWARD CEREMONY
BANGABANDHU INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTER,
DHAKA
SEPTEMBER 25, 2013

The Honorable Speaker of the Parliament Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury

The Honorable Minister of Information, Hasanul Haq Inu

The Secretary of Finance Fazle Kabir

UNDP Country Director Pauline Tamesis

The seven winners of the Service Innovation Fund small grants ... chosen from over 4800 applications!

... and all who believe as I do that digital technology is key to unleashing the great potential of Bangladesh

Asalaam 'mlaikum and good morning!

Ours is a most fortunate generation ...

We are witnesses to a period of great transformation of history.

We follow in the footsteps of forefathers who similarly witnessed periods of great transformation, such as the emergence of steam power, which launched the Industrial Revolution ...

... such as the emergence of electrical power, which launched the Modern Era.

Our generation today bears witness to a transformation as fundamental as that driven by the advent of steam power, of electrical power ...

Perhaps, the transformation that we are now witnessing will be even greater than that of those earlier eras.

I speak of the power of digital technology ... a power so great, so revolutionary, so life altering ... a power that is shifting the course of history ... digital technology.

Indeed, ours is a most fortunate generation ... so fortunate are we to witness such historic transformation.

Bangladesh, however, does not content itself to be a mere witness to history.

Rather, Bangladesh is a part of history, as this great nation engages aggressively and creatively in the transformation ... the global revolution ... driven by the power of digital technology.

Bangladesh already has taken great strides into the Digital Era.

Already all 64 districts, all 4501 union parishads are linked into the digital network.

Already Bangladeshis have digital access to key government services such as land titling, birth registration, university applications, among others.

Digital technology has made delivery of these fundamental services both more efficient and less subject to rent seeking.

This is impressive progress.

But Bangladesh is not content with this.

Bangladesh continues to push the frontiers of digital technology, and young Bangladeshis are getting plugged ... making the Embassy's Facebook page the third most visited of any U.S. Embassy in the world.

The Digital Revolution ... like all revolutions ... may be of global proportions, but it is driven by individuals ...

Individuals ... creative, innovative, energetic individuals ... individuals who endeavor to realize the practical benefits of the Digital Revolution.

Today we honor these individuals ... today we reward the creativity of these individuals ... by providing them small grants so they can translate their vision into a new reality ...

... a new reality that facilitates fertilizer recommendations for farmers ...

... a new reality that provides payment of insurance claims by mobile phone ... and the list of innovative ideas goes on.

I am pleased that my government is a partner with the Government of Bangladesh and UNDP in making these small grants possible to the digital innovators of Bangladesh. American business ... Microsoft, Dell, Intel and others ... also play a role in building Digital Bangladesh. Bangladeshi-Americans and Bangladeshi alumni of American universities are leaders in building digital linkages between our countries.

With the award today of seven small grants from the digital Service Innovation Fund, Bangladesh takes seven more steps down the road to the Digital Bangladesh.

I believe the Digital Bangladesh will be a more efficient Bangladesh, a more competitive Bangladesh, a more just Bangladesh, a stronger and more prosperous Bangladesh.

I believe digital technology will foster the middle income Bangladesh, where all have the means to provide their families safe housing, ample, nutritious food, good healthcare, quality education.

I believe the Digital Revolution will contribute importantly to Bangladesh's becoming the next Asian tiger ... the Royal Bengal Tiger ... imagine Bangladesh, the world's seventh largest country ... the Royal Bengal Tiger ... strutting proudly and powerfully across the global economic stage ...

I believe the Digital Revolution will enable Bangladesh to realize its beautiful vision of Sonar Bangla.

Thank you.

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Prepared for delivery