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REMARKS BY

U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA MADHUPUR REFORESTATION PROJECT MADHUPUR FOREST, TANGAIL DISTRICT

JULY 18, 2012

Honorable Food and Disaster Minister Razzaq

Chief Conservator of the Forest Yunus Ali

Tangail Deputy Commissioner Bazlul Karim

And all of you, fellow lovers of the forest, and, most especially the hundreds of volunteers who protect and cherish this wonderful forest

Asalaam m'alaikum, shal-nam, yeshu narashong, and good morning.

Pretend you are walking through Madhupur Forest ...

In your mind, look up, look around ...

In your mind, listen, listen carefully ...

What do you see? What do you hear?

Life, new life ...

Beauty ... beautiful trees, flowers, plants, animals, birds ... indeed, life ...

... and it is wonderful; it is glorious.

In your heart, what do you feel? What do you feel right now, as we sit together and take an imaginary walk through Madhupur Forest?

I hope you feel great pride ...

Each of you ... you, the citizens who live in the forest,

you, the government officials charged with managing the forest,

you the forest volunteers who protect and preserve this wonderful gift from God.

Each of you must be so proud that today the forest is coming alive and growing ...
The illegal felling of trees has stopped ...

In fact, over 5000 forest families have planted 10 lakh trees ... indeed, the forest is growing ...

And the forest is thriving ... wild chickens, monkeys, deer have all returned ...

And forest families are thriving ... they now have their own tree plantations ... they use improved agricultural methods ... they use cook stoves that consume less fuel ... they raise livestock ... and they earn money by protecting and cherishing this glorious forest.

And Bangladesh benefits, too ... Bangladesh is challenged to preserve green space, forests, and nature reservations ...

You, the good citizens of Madhupur, have shown that if the forests are properly managed and respected, both the forest people and the forests themselves can thrive ...

... truly have shown the nation, South Asia and the world the way how people and nature can co-exist to the mutual benefit of both.

I deeply applaud the Forest Department and the leaders and citizens of the forest people for loving your forest so much that you all came together to find a way to save it, to expand it ... while at the same time enabling the people of the forest to improve their conditions of life.

You have shown the way ...

The challenge now is for others throughout Bangladesh to follow your example.

I am proud that America has partnered with the Government of Bangladesh and the great people of this wondrous nation to help preserve and expand Bangladesh's treasured nature and beauty.

In fact, we partner with the government in over 25 of the nation's natural preserves and there, too, much progress is being made to restore the beauty of this great nation.

I am deeply honored today by this opportunity to be with you, as you are the heroes who are preserving and building the new Bangladesh, the Golden Bangladesh.

Thank you for this honor.

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