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REMARKS BY U.S. AMBASSADOR DAN MOZENA'S REMARKS AT THE VISIT TO DEBTEC, HOSTED BY FERDOUSI BEGUM PHD SOUTH PANISHILE, GAZIPUR DISTRICT AUGUST 28, 2012

Ferdousi Begum, PhD, Farmer, Biotechnologist, Friend

Thank you so much for our most fascinating tour and discussion of the work you have underway here in your laboratory ... I am most impressed.

I would like to tell a story ...

I am a bicyclist and when I am home in America I go to my native state of Iowa, and I bicycle to visit the farm where I was born and grew up.

I first noticed the big change about ten years ago.

I was bicycling to the farm when I started seeing things I had never seen before.

Since I am a bird watcher, I noticed birds along the road that I had not seen when I lived there as a boy.

I stopped and asked an old neighbor, Cy Lahey, where did all of these birds come from?

He laughed and said, "Danny, that is not the half of it ... the forests are now full of turkeys, coyotes, beavers, deer, bald eagles and other animals that we have not seen in this area for nearly a hundred years."

Puzzled, I called the agricultural extension agent when I got back to my mother's house and asked him where all of these animals came from as I had never seen any of them during the 17 years that I had lived on the farm.

He said the answer was simple: biotechnology.

Farmers, he explained, now plant biotech soybeans that are resistant to pests, so farmers no longer use pesticides on their fields ... and within only a few years the area's natural food chain was restored, enabling animals to return after an absence of many decades.

I said it was like a miracle.

He said, "No, it's no miracle ... it's biotechnology."

Bangladesh is discovering on its own the miracle of biotechnology.

Here in DEBTEC laboratories, we have just seen some of the exciting and promising work being done with biotechnology.

At the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute, scientists have used biotechnology to develop strains of eggplant and potato and sweet potatoes that are disease resistant ... and the result has been healthy plants, improved yields and reduced need to spray the plants.

These preliminary results seem miraculous ...

... but we already know ...

... these results are not miracles, they are the products of biotechnology research by the wonderful scientists at BARI.

I believe that these and other biotech plant varieties will play an important part in Bangladesh's continued progress in being able to feed its ever growing population an ample, healthy, nutritious diet, one that eliminates the dreaded specter of children whose physical and mental development is stunted for want of good food.

I am proud of America's role – both historically and on an ongoing basis – in supporting such critical research at BARI, at the Bangladesh Agricultural University and elsewhere.

I am pleased that USAID is undertaking to deepen and expand our support for tertiary education for the next generation of Bangladeshi agronomists, scientists and researchers, so they can continue the exciting research that is now paying such rich dividends for Bangladesh.

I am proud, too, that American is partnering with Bangladesh through President Obama's Feed the Future Initiative to help make Bangladesh more food secure.

Bangladesh is among the largest partners in the world for this major initiative, which already is well underway in 20 vulnerable districts of south and southwest Bangladesh, where the partnership is increasing agricultural productivity, increasing income and access to affordable food, and improving nutrition and dietary diversity.

This partnership supports the research on biotech eggplant and blight resistant potatoes that I mentioned a moment ago; it supports development of high yielding, stress tolerant rice varieties; it supports research involving seed production, fish and shrimp farming, extension work and so much more.

In less than two years, the partnership is yielding huge results already: more than 2.3 million Bangladeshi farmers are using improved technologies, including fertilizer deep placement, on over 575,000 hectares.

Other farmers have expanded their fish ponds and implemented new fish and shrimp management approaches.

The results are dramatic as the value of crops, fish, shrimp, rice and horticulture has already increased by over \$250 million (about 2000 crore taka)... and this is only the start!

I am, indeed, most proud of the strong partnership between America and Bangladesh in helping the great people of this wonderful nation have access to ample, safe, diverse, nutritious food so all Bangladeshis have good diets and the horror of stunting of children is eliminated forever from Bangladesh.

Let me end as I began by thanking Ferdousi Begum for her gracious hospitality and fine work for the people of Bangladesh.

Thank you.

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