

## **EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

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## **REMARKS BY U.S. AMBASSADOR DAN MOZENA ARANNYAK FOUNDATION BOOK LAUNCH DUDHPUKURIA, RANGUNIA, CHITTAGONG April 4, 2012**

Dr. Hasan Mahmud, Minister of Environment and Forest

Mr. Mesbah ul Alam, Secretary of Environment and Forest

Mr. Md. Yunus Ali, Chief Conservator of Forests

Deputy Commissioner, Chittagong

Mr. Reed Merrill, USAID Implementing Partner for Co-management

Mr. Farid Uddin Ahmed, Arannyak Foundation

Honored and distinguished guests and friends

Asalaam m'alaikum

Good morning!

Nature is a powerful force.

Sometimes that power can be most destructive, like the horrible tornado that hit Rangunia some weeks back. My thoughts are with those who suffered the impact of that terrible storm.

Nature is also a powerful force for beauty, which is everywhere evident in Bangladesh, most especially here in this beautiful part of Bangladesh. I will witness more of this splendor when I hike into the Dudhpukuria – Dophachari Wildlife Sanctuary later this morning.

Bangladesh truly is a much blessed country ... richly endowed with fertile soil, ample water, great wetlands, productive forests and wondrous beauty from the Hill Tracts and the Sundarbans to the farthest reaches in the North.

The challenge in Bangladesh as in America and around the world is how to use these rich resources to provide for the nation's people today while preserving these same resources so our children and grandchildren can benefit from them tomorrow.

This balance is not easy.

Choices must be made.

Think about the beautiful forests that surround us here. One could cut down all the trees, sell them for timber, clear the shrubs and underbrush and use that for firewood. In the end, one will have earned money for some weeks or months and leave behind a waste land devoid of animal and plant life, which has nothing more to give. This approach is all-too-common here in Bangladesh, in America and in so many other countries.

But there is another way. Rather than destroy these natural gifts, one can nurture them, so the trees, forests and wetlands remain healthy, protecting the people from the worst ravages of floods and cyclones while providing alternative sources of income to the inhabitants. This approach ensures that these natural treasures are available for our children, while at the same time providing for the well-being of those who live in and near these natural sites.

I am happy that Bangladesh is increasingly turning to the second approach, the one of conserving the environment. The Ministry of Environment and Forests, under the leadership of Minister Mahmud, is showing the way.

I am pleased that my government is a strong partner of Bangladesh in the battle to save the environment. In 2000 then President Clinton and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina signed an 18 year agreement by which America and Bangladesh jointly created the Arannyak Foundation. This foundation has been a powerful mechanism for preserving Bangladesh's forests while give local inhabitants a voice and economic stake in co-managing effectively the forests.

The foundation's success is evident as Bangladesh progresses in preserving more and more of its forests and wetlands.

Of course, much remains to be done, but Bangladesh and, especially, Minister Mahmud and his team should be proud of the rich legacy they are creating for the next generation. I know that I am proud of my government's role in partnering with Bangladesh to preserve the environment.

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**\*Prepared for delivery\***

**GR/ 2012**