

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION

TEL: 880-2-883-7150-4

FAX: 880-2-9881677, 9885688

E-MAIL: DhakaPA@state.gov

WEBSITE: <http://dhaka.usembassy.gov>



**REMARKS BY
U.S. AMBASSADOR DAN MOZENA
AT THE AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

THE TRANSFORMING BANGLADESH

**RUPOSHI BANGLA HOTEL
NOVEMBER 4, 2012**

Aftabul Islam, Amcham President

Gafur, AmCham Executive Director

Good friends, both here at the head table and throughout the room, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen

Asalaam m'laikum and good afternoon

A year ago ... a year ago this month, I arrived in Dhaka to make true my dream of coming back to this wondrous nation as my country's ambassador.

Some of you may recall that day ...

Some of you may recall seeing me struggle as I came off the plane and touched Bangladeshi soil, lugging behind me a great sack ...

Thunk ... thunk ... thunk ... even today, if you listen closely you can hear the thunk, thunk, thunk of the sack I take with me everywhere I go in Bangladesh, including luncheon meetings with my good friends of AmCham.

In this sack is my mandate from Washington, my heavy mandate to broaden, deepen, strengthen the relationship between America and Bangladesh, to the mutual benefit of the people of both nations. I made clear on the day of my arrival as I make clear today, that I am prepared to take this relationship to the greatest heights ... as a senior State Department official put it during her visit here, "... the sky is the limit for the U.S.-Bangladesh relationship."

As I look over this past year, I am pleased ... it has been a transformative year in broadening, deepening, strengthening the partnership between American and Bangladesh.

In May, Secretary Clinton came to Bangladesh to celebrate the richness and success of our partnership with Bangladesh. She came to institutionalize the partnership, so it would endure into the decades ahead. She and Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, under the approving eye of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, signed an agreement to establish a Partnership Dialogue.

The first annual session of the Partnership Dialogue took place in Washington in September, and it was a grand success as Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Sherman and Foreign Secretary Quayes convened the plenary session to review the reports of the working groups on development and governance, trade and investment, and security and regional integration. The Dialogue was invaluable in giving strategic direction to our broadening, deepening and strengthening partnership.

With this strategic guidance from the Partnership Dialogue, I see a busy and transformative year ahead for our partnership with Bangladesh:

- Our development assistance program, the largest in Asia outside of Afghanistan and Pakistan, has now passed the \$200 million a year mark, which will enable us to deepen our partnership with Bangladesh in improving health, increasing food security, mitigating for the effects of global climate change, and strengthening the nation's emerging democratic institutions.
- We will work hard with Bangladesh to prepare for natural disasters, especially earthquakes. We will help Bangladesh build more cyclone and flood shelters, including thirty that will serve as a string of Coastal Crisis Management Centers along the southern part of the country to enable fast response and rescue in the wake of disaster.
- We are partnering with the Bangladesh military to increase its capacity to secure the nation's land and maritime borders. We hope to provide the Bangladesh Navy a cutter so it can better secure the Bay of Bengal. We are also working to provide four C-130's to increase Bangladesh's capacity to respond to natural disasters and to engage in peacekeeping operations.
- We will use the Edward M. Kennedy Center for Public Service and the Arts, newly opened in partnership with the Liberation War Museum in Dhanmondi, to strengthen people-to-people ties, especially to bring America closer to the young people of Bangladesh, the leaders of tomorrow.

- We will endeavor to support the increasing interest of Bangladeshis to study in the United States. This year, Bangladeshi students received over \$10 million in scholarships to study in America.
- We seek to sign agreements to expand cooperation in countering terrorism, in developing programs to protect vulnerable youth against the misguided lure of violent extremism, in fighting drug trafficking and in strengthening scientific and technological ties. We will explore how to help Bangladesh set up regional centers for training security personnel and for managing urban disasters, such as earthquakes.
- We pledge to continue to work with the vibrant and innovative Bangladeshi civil society and NGO community that has contributed mightily to Bangladesh's historic achievements in health, education, and social welfare.
- And I will continue my engagement with the Bangladeshi diaspora in America to expand their support to Bangladesh.

I could spend the next hour recounting the details of our partnership with Bangladesh over the coming year, but I hope that I have already made my point: we are working hard and successfully to broaden, to deepen, to strengthen the relationship between America and Bangladesh.

I believe that this growing partnership between America and Bangladesh has contributed and will continue to contribute to the emergence of the New Bangladesh, the Middle-Income Bangladesh, Sonar Bangladesh. I am proud that America is doing its part in helping Bangladesh become the next Asian tiger.

I am often asked about my vision of Bangladesh's potential to be the next Asian tiger. Why, I am asked, do I see so much potential in Bangladesh.

The answer is simple ... as I crisscross Bangladesh, I see everywhere the nation's rich bounty: the fertile soil, the ample water, the great climate that enables up to three growing seasons, natural resources like gas and coal, and, most importantly, the incredible people of this nation, the most energetic, dynamic, creative, entrepreneurial, and resilient people whom I know. Indeed, Bangladesh is a rich country ... and I can say this with some authority as by year's end I will have visited about half of Bangladesh's 64 districts.

Let me share with you some of the discoveries from my ventures, then, perhaps, you will better understand my hope, my belief that someday soon we will see Asia's next tiger, the Royal Bengal Tiger, strutting powerfully and proudly across the global economic stage:

- Bangladesh is in the midst of an agricultural revolution, led by Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, and America is her partner. Thanks to the partnership, Barisal has become a rice exporting district; thanks to the partnership, 1.2 million farmers in southern Bangladesh are already using improved agricultural technology that enables them to increase rice production by up to 20% while cutting fertilizer costs by 15-20%. We hope to add five lakh or more farmers in the coming year. The Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute is using biotechnology to develop disease resistant eggplant and potato varieties. I also saw research being done on drought-, flood-, and saline-resistant seed varieties. At Bangladesh Agriculture University in Mymensingh, I saw pioneering work done on dwarf and fast yielding fruit trees, which are critically needed by poor people who have little land. I learned that 90 percent of Bangladesh farmland is mechanically tilled ... 90%! I tried recently to take a National Geographic photograph of cows pulls a plow, but couldn't find any ... only tillers! When I visited Tangail, I witnessed an ocean of pineapple and in Mymensingh I found a similar ocean of jackfruit ... the potential for food processing was readily apparent. Can you believe that Bangladesh has already become rice self-sufficient? And I believe that within a decade Bangladesh will become food self-sufficient ... this in a nation once described as a bottomless basket. Truly, a great agricultural revolution is underway.
- The soil has even more to give. Bangladesh could become a major silk producer. Silk production has already left Japan and is leaving South Korea and China, while world demand climbs. Bangladesh could/should become the future home of silk production, which could soar in Bangladesh from the current 50 tons a year to over 1000 tons, creating millions of jobs in this highly labor-intensive industry. Jute, the miracle fiber, has greatest potential, which is yet to be tapped. Two enterprising young Bangladeshis have shown that jute can even be made into a product they call jutin and used to build houses.
- My travels have also revealed the nation's great entrepreneurial spirit. I met Mrs. Malik in Khulna ... she is a lady of vision. She took out a loan to buy a machine that produces

fertilizer briquettes (guti fertilizer) from urea granules. She is a valued member of the community as I learned from five farmers who are her customers. And she is prospering; she has already paid back her loan and is steadily improving her family's quality of life. In Rangamati I met Mrs. Chakma, who started her own handloom industry, which has grown to provide jobs for over 100 women. These are just two examples of the millions of Bangladeshi entrepreneurs. In Bangladesh, as in America, the entrepreneur, the small businessman or woman, is the engine that drives much of the nation's economy.

- When I visited Khulna, I saw firsthand fish and shrimp production and processing. I saw the enormous potential that this industry has to offer, especially in those areas most vulnerable to the impact of climate change. I saw, too, that the industry is challenged to meet sanitary and phytosanitary standards, so this is a hurdle that remains to be overcome, but the potential for Bangladesh to expand this industry was readily apparent.
- My travels have also taken me to state-of-the-art spinning, weaving and garment making facilities, to bone china factories, to world-class leather and footwear factories, to a new petrochemical facility in Chittagong that uses cutting edge technology, to pharmaceutical production facilities more modern than any in America, to shipyards where small and medium freighters are being built for the regional and global market.

I could tell tales from my many trips for countless hours, but I think that I have made point: amazing things are happening across Bangladesh ... farmers, women entrepreneurs, big industrialists, creative young people ... each in his/her own way is building the Sonar Bangladesh ... they are building the Sonar Bangladesh today, not in some undefined distant future.

Of course, we all know the constraints: inadequate ports, railroads, road networks, power, energy, lack of quality education and skills training, and the challenges of corruption, rule of law, respect for labor rights, and the threat of political instability ... these challenges are real, are serious, but each one/each one can be overcome, and that is exactly what I believe Bangladesh will do as it builds the Sonar Bangladesh.

I am pleased/I am proud that America is Bangladesh's strong partner as Bangladesh endeavors to become the next Asian tiger. America is the single largest investor in Bangladesh, the single largest market for Bangladeshi exports, and the third largest source of remittances.

And America is Bangladesh's steadfast partner in so many fields, ranging from health and food security to democracy and governance to border security and disaster preparedness.

As I stand before you at this very moment, I recommit myself to do everything in my power to broaden, deepen, strengthen the relationship, the partnership between America and Bangladesh. I promise that for the next two years I will continue to lug about everywhere I go in Bangladesh this sack with my mandate to take the relationship with Bangladesh to ever greater heights.

So, next time you hear thunk, thunk, thunk, coming down the hall, don't be alarmed ... it's only me and my US Mission Team doing whatever we can to help Bangladesh create the conditions that will give birth to Asia's next economic tiger ... the Royal Bengal Tiger.

Thank you.

=====

**As prepared for delivery*