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**REMARKS  
BY  
U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA  
GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY  
HOPE HOSPITAL MATERNITY AND FISTULA CENTER  
COX'S BAZAR**

**DECEMBER 11, 2014**

Mustaq Ahmed Chowdhury, District Council Administrator, Cox's Bazar

Dr. Mokhesur Rahman Khan, District Civil Surgeon, Cox's Bazar

Hope Hospital Country Director Hasnain Sabih Nayak

Hope Hospital Director Dr. Hoab Ahmad

Hope Hospital Medical Director Dr. Prantika Chakrabarty

Mahmudul Hasan and Professor Mustaq Ahmed, Adviser to Hope Bangladesh

Dr. Steven Arrowsmith and Dr. Sirajul Islam, fellow Americans who support fistula care

... and all of you who join the battle to prevent and repair fistula

Asalaam 'malaikum, nameskar and good afternoon

"Are you crazy?" my colleague asked sharply.

"You can't possibly go to Cox's Bazar during your last week as Ambassador to Bangladesh ... you are never going to be ready for your final departure."

My colleague, of course, was right, but here I am ...

I am here because I so want to be a part of this historic moment ... a moment that brings hope and new life to so many ...

... hope and new life to those women who suffer from and endure fistula ...

... hope and new life to pregnant women so they may have safe deliveries, sparing them the anguish of fistula and other serious post-partum complications ...

... hope and new life as the Hope Maternity and Fistula Center that will arise at this very place endeavors to address the social causes and health care system weaknesses that contribute so strongly to obstetric fistula....

... I speak of social pressure for early marriage and pressure to have a child as soon as possible ...

... I speak of the need for quality health care services for pregnant women ...

... I speak of the need for quality attendants during delivery.

Preventing fistula and other pregnancy-related complications is our shared goal.

When we fail in this endeavor, then the need is to repair fistula as soon as possible to save the new mother the stigma of fistula.

We know of but cannot understand and empathize with the ridicule, isolation, rejection, loss of dignity and self-esteem suffered and endured by those women who live with fistula.

We simply cannot know this pain.

But we do know that this anguish can be repaired ...

... and that is what this new facility that we launch today is all about.

That is what the Hope Hospital is all about.

America, too, has joined the battle to help the victims of fistula.

America ... through USAID ... engages with 14 private and government hospitals to help prevent and repair obstetric fistula, to rehabilitate fistula patients by helping them develop income generating skills, and to help fistula patients reintegrate into their families and communities.

I am proud that the American government is working hard with our Bangladeshi partners to confront the scourge of fistula by bringing hope to both the estimated 70,000 women who already live with this scourge and the estimated 2000 women who join the ranks of fistula victims each year.

I am proud that American citizens such as Steven and Sirajul and so many others are also working so hard to bring hope to those living with fistula.

So, am I crazy to be here today on the eve of my departure from Bangladesh?

I think not.

I think this is where I should be ...

I think this is where I want to be ...

Here in Cox's Bazar ...

... standing with representatives of the government and civil society ...

... standing with the great leaders and staff of Hope Hospital ...

... standing with my generous fellow countrymen who are so committed to helping others.

All of us here today ...

... all of us standing together here in Cox's Bazar to bring hope ... hope ... hope and light to those living with fistula ...

Truly, I know this is where I must be ...

This is where I must be.

Thank you.

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*\*As prepared for delivery*