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Ambassador Mozena: Good morning. And thank you everyone for coming this morning.

The very first thing I want to do, and I know that [Mohsin] just did it, I just have to introduce again my wonderful, wonderful, wonderful colleague Janina Jaruzelski. She's the big boss of USAID.

This past week, a whole week, seven days, we have traveled six districts of Rangpur Division. So I want to thank the government of these districts, I want to thank the people of these districts for a very warm welcome. Each place we went, our visits were so informative. Pabna, Bogura, Joypurhat, Gaibandha, Rangpur, Lalmonirhat. So I'm going to review my whole trip and then Janina will add in some special things from her perspective.

One last thing, I want to thank the Rangpur division government as well for supporting our visit.

So maybe you're wondering why is the American Ambassador traveling around like this. The answer is very simple. On November 24, 2011, when I gave my credentials to then President Zillur Rahman, now late President Zillur Rahman, I said to the wonderful President that I am America's Ambassador to Bangladesh, not only Dhaka. I told President Zillur Rahman that I want to reach out to all 64 districts to learn about this country. I didn't know then how big Bangladesh is. So my goals in traveling around Bangladesh are to see our projects, U.S. projects in action. Janina will give you an update on that.

But I also wanted to bring a bit of America to different parts of Bangladesh. But most importantly, most importantly, I wanted to learn first-hand about Bangladesh. To see the nation's great assets and strengths as it endeavors to develop. On this trip we have seen so much. On this trip we have learned so much. I'd like to share a few highlights.

I was born and raised on a farm. I spent the first two decades of my life milking cows. I am a farmer at heart. I love agriculture. I have a keen interest in agriculture. And I was so impressed by what I saw in these six districts. I saw huge surpluses of rice. These districts are truly the granary of Bangladesh. I saw oceans of bananas. Maybe this is the banana capital of the world. Oceans of watermelons, of onions, and when I went to Lalmonirhat and I looked out on those maize fields after maize field after maize field, I thought I was in my home state of Iowa. Iowa is the number one maize state of America. I learned that the number one contributor of dairy

products is one of these districts, Pabna. Poultry, number two in the whole nation. And in Rangpur I visited Grameen Intel and saw how farmers can have access to modern information technology to learn about seeds, to learn about fertilizer, to learn about pest control, to learn about markets. And in Ishwardi we met with the national award winning farmers. I don't know if you've had a chance to meet these farmers. They are amazing. I could have spent just a week in one place with them.

I could go on and on about the agricultural achievements, but I think you get the point. I think you now can understand my optimism that Bangladesh's agricultural revolution will make Bangladesh food self-sufficient within a decade. I give great credit to the leadership of Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury. And to the district and divisional leadership. And most especially to the farmers themselves.

And we learned so much more about economic development. We learned about the EPZ in Pabna. We learned about the growing pharmaceutical industry. We visited Edrug Pharmaceuticals. We visited a cold storage, Al Haj Cold Storage. We learned that Lalmonirhat is exporting potatoes to Singapore, to Sri Lanka, to Malaysia. We learned that Joypurhat is exporting potato powder to Finland and to Australia. Did you know that?

And we visited cottage industries. We went to Nijera cottage and village industries, and we saw the beautiful world class work they do with indigo. And the work they're doing with quilting and honey production and so much more.

And we met the most amazing village woman. A woman who just got her U.S. visa. She is going to New Mexico in America. New Mexico is a state in America. She is going to take her quilt to the number one, number one folk art convention in the entire world. Only 150 artisans from the whole world are invited to come to this convention, and she is going.

We also visited and learned about Shatranji rugs and placemats. Beautiful quality.

We went to the Burimari Land Port and we saw the trade between Bangladesh and India, Bangladesh and Bhutan. And we saw the potential for even more.

President Obama talks about the Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor, which would link Central Asia and South Asia with China and Singapore and the world. Burimari is part of that new trade route.

Switching to the health sector. In Pabna we visited Bangladesh's only mental health institute. We were impressed by how hard the staff was working to meet these challenges.

In Bogra we participated in a National Conference of the Disabled. We saw first-hand how disabled are working to help themselves. Also in Bogra we visited a modern kidney dialysis center. This center was established by Bangladeshi-Americans, and they support this and six

other centers just like it all around Bangladesh. This partnership between Bangladeshi-Americans and Bangladesh is something I'm working very hard to build and strengthen.

In Gaibandha we went and visited a U.S. Government supported nutrition study. Janina will talk about that.

I want to talk about something else. I want to talk about the tourism potential. This region is a big secret, but it's not a secret anymore because maybe Bangladeshis don't talk about it, but I do. Because we have seen the beautiful countryside and we went to Mahasthangarh, this world class archeological site, world class.

We went to Shah Sultan Mohammed Balkhi's Mazaar. What a beautiful place. We went to Tajhut, Harding Bridge.

And then last night we saw living culture. We went to Arshi Nagar Children's Choir and Orchestra. That was in Lalmonirhat. It was magnificent. If you have not seen or heard them, you must do so. We have with us two people from there. Please stand up. [Applause]. They are wonderful. They have a beautiful story to tell. Thank you.

There's so much more I could tell about the potential for tourism, but I think I've made that point.

In all of our visits we also learned of the challenges that the region is facing, especially in some districts river erosion. Literacy was an issue. Quality of education. The need for skills training. Better connectivity with the big markets. The need for more agricultural processing and cold storage. More gas and more power so there can be more industrialization. These are real challenges but they can be overcome. I believe they will be overcome.

So here's my bottom line. There is so much happening in these districts. There is so much going on to tap into this nation's vast potential. All of this leaves me so encouraged. I am more convinced than ever that Bangladesh is right now building middle income Bangladesh. Middle income Bangladesh where all have the means to provide their families secure housing, to provide their families ample nutritious food, to provide their families good health care, to provide their children quality education. I am more convinced than ever that Bangladesh right now, right now, right now is building the shonar bangla of Tagore's dreams, of our shared vision.

Thank you all.

Director Jaruzelski: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador. It's always a pleasure and an honor to travel with you. I want to thank you for your leadership on this trip. It's been fabulous.

And to you all, good morning.

It's a real pleasure to be here with you in Rangpur. As the Ambassador was describing, we have had a fabulous trip. Over the past six days I've had the opportunity to meet many wonderful people and experience the warm and delightful hospitality that Bangladesh is well known for. So I would like to thank the people of Rangpur as well as Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat and all of the people from the communities whom we met with for their warm and cordial welcome.

From April 8th to April 10th USAID in partnership with Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur, hosted a Gender and Development Fair on the university's campus. A range of local partners from government and from numerous different kinds of NGOs joined with us to showcase the many and various roles that women play in advancing progress in this country. The fair highlighted and was intended to highlight that women play a critical role not only in their families and communities, but in every aspect of society and the economy. They're essential in education, in health care, in agriculture and aquaculture, in entrepreneurship and marketing, in governance, and in much much more. Women in Bangladesh are fully 50 percent of the population and only when they are fully participating in all aspects of society will Bangladesh successfully move forward.

The full participation of women is essential to meet the middle income status goal that the Ambassador talked about in his speech. That's why the fair was called Gender and Development, because those two things are integrated. They're totally linked. That's why it was very exciting to me to see the level of participation in the fair. We had literally thousands of people there. Thousands of people, men as well as women. We also had very substantial participation from the government of Bangladesh at all levels -- at national level, and regional and local level. We had members of parliament and the State Minister for Women's and Children's Affairs, and the State Minister for Local Government and Rural Development participating in many of the events. But most exciting for me was to see the energy and the enthusiasm and the commitment of the people themselves, and particularly the young people. That was a great experience. I want to thank the Ambassador for his leadership in that fair as well.

USAID is active in North Bengal as we are throughout the country. During my six day trip to North Bengal I had the opportunity to visit a number of our USAID projects in this area. I was, for example, delighted to see the excellent Smiling Sun Clinic operating here in Rangpur. This clinic is one of 327 NGO health clinics operating throughout Bangladesh. There's also a Smiling Son Clinic in Lalmonirhat and indeed in every district in Bangladesh. Whether it's providing children's vaccinations or counseling for married couples on family planning, or giving pregnant women advice on proper nutrition, these clinics provide a one-stop shop for all basic health care services.

The Smiling Sun Clinics, which USAID has been supporting for a while now, make a positive difference every single day in the practical lives of people in Rangpur Division and throughout Bangladesh in fact.

On April 8th I also had the opportunity go to Kaunia upazila to see one of USAID's SHOUHARDO project sites. There a local women's group is working very constructively with the Union Parishad chairman and other council members to empower women and protect women's rights. Local women are working with the officials to prevent early marriage, to prevent the use of dowry as a condition for marriage, and to resolve when necessary issues of domestic disputes and domestic violence.

I was really extremely impressed by the concrete results of this very effective partnership between local women at the village level and the local government authorities. For example, I met with one young girl named Taslima. Taslima, a very young school girl, had been the victim of what some people call eve-teasing. Every day when she walked to school in the morning and when she came home in the afternoon as well, she was accosted by a young man, the same young man on a motor bike. This young man pestered her and made inappropriate remarks every day. She found this very upsetting, very unpleasant, very intimidating. In fact it was so upsetting and so uncomfortable for her that she was thinking about leaving school. She liked school, but she was thinking of dropping out because she just could not stand this pestering, this embarrassment anymore. Indeed, she was actually so embarrassed by the situation she didn't even feel comfortable telling her own parents.

However, fortunately, the EKATA Women's Group from SHOUHARDO was active in her village. Though she didn't feel comfortable discussing this problem with her parents, she was able to go to the women's group of EKATA and talk to them. The village EKATA group was able to explain the situation to her parents and even more importantly, the EKATA group women went together to confront the harasser and the harasser's family. Initially the harasser didn't want to respond, but they kept up the pressure and they kept talking to him and to his family and in the end, they got him to stop. Now Taslima goes to school safely, securely, and is happy and comfortable. She has even become a member of the EKATA group herself.

So consistently in this project and elsewhere I've been impressed by the energy and resourcefulness of Bangladeshi people who are able to help themselves with a little bit of help from us.

The Ambassador promised I would talk a bit about JiViTa. So I do want to mention JiViTa because JiViTa is a great project. Together with the Ambassador I visited the JiViTa site in Gaibandha. There some very interesting, very dynamic researchers from Johns Hopkins University are working on smart, low cost, effective practical ways to deal with the issue of child nutrition. This project is really exciting, really wonderful. Initially USAID supported this project for many years. Now it is supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

We don't have time to talk about all of the different things that JiViTa is doing because it's many, many things, but just to give you one concrete example. The JiViTa researchers have discovered that, sifting through very careful scientific analysis, that just giving one simple low cost dose of Vitamin A to an infant on the day it is born can reduce infant mortality by 15

percent. Think about that. One little low cost dose of Vitamin A, and you can reduce infant mortality by 15 percent. That's impressive.

These are just a few of the many activities of U.S. government supports here in the Rangpur Division.

Just to briefly mention, because we don't have time to go into descriptions, briefly mention a few of the others. The U.S. government is sponsoring programs to fight human trafficking. The U.S. government through USAID is sponsoring the Cereal Systems Initiative, which deals with the issue of food security. Through USAID's Mayerhashi Project, we are supporting family planning. Through USAID's PROTIVA project we are addressing the issue of early education and teachers' training. Through the Strengthening Democratic and Local Governance project, we are promoting decentralization and transparency in local government. Every week people throughout this division are watching the famous Sisimpur TV program, which is a national program that USAID sponsors.

There are many examples we can give from USAID and other government agencies, but all I want to say in conclusion is that USAID and the U.S. government in general, as the Ambassador has indicated, is committed, very strongly committed to working with the people of Bangladesh to support prosperity, support a democracy, support stability and support the government of Bangladesh's own role of achieving middle income status.

Thank you so much.

Question: Your Excellency, I am Shawkat from Daily Star, an English newspaper.

My question is, first of all we would like to thank you that you have come to Rangpur on this six day exclusive visit.

Ambassador Mozena: Seven day.

Question: Seven day visit.

During your visit you inquired about socioeconomic development of this region. We know from your [visit]. But socioeconomic development depends on political stability. We know that after the Jan 5 elections opposition political parties are trying to spear a movement against the government. The parliamentary election is not accepted by some major parties. So do you think any opportunity of new set of elections in Bangladesh?

Ambassador Mozena: Thank you for your question. I would first point out that the U.S. position is well known on this issue. We've spoken to it repeatedly. You can reference those citations. But America always stands by the democratic process. America believes that it's important that all parties have political space to express their views. America believes that all

parties have an obligation to use that political space responsibly and peacefully.

Question: My name is Harun. I have two questions to USAID chief Janina.

[Through Interpreter]. The first question is, you have been working on development projects in Bangladesh. Are you working for any particular project which is associated with journalists for their development? For their progress? Are you working in any such programs? If yes, what are they?

Director Jaruzelski: Thank you very much for your question about our interest in journalists. We very much believe that journalism and an independent press are a key part of democratic development. In fact it's part of the Gender Development Fair at Begum Rokeya University, which we just sponsored and which I talked about during my discussion. We sponsored in partnership with Voice of America training especially geared for journalists. That training took place here in Rangpur and was extremely well attended. In fact it was over-subscribed. Fifty-one journalists I believe took part. So we were delighted by that. That's part of a series of journalist trainings that we have been conducting.

Question: [Through Interpreter]. He's asking, you have been talking with a lot of optimism about the Bangladesh progress and becoming middle income Bangladesh. However, in order to achieve that the government has to stay in power for a certain period of time which is quite like five years. So does America think that this government will stay in power for five years? If not, does the U.S. government wants to see this government in power five years?

Ambassador Mozena: It's not a question for the U.S. government. It's a question for the people of Bangladesh.

Question: [Through Interpreter]. You have talked about a lot of issues related to the development of this division but one of the biggest challenge that this area is facing is climate change and the water level is going down for that. Plus there are 54 rivers which are connected to India and we are not getting the proper water for that. So as a part of the international community what do you think you can do for assisting us in this issue?

Ambassador Mozena: On the broader issue of climate change, America is very much engaged here in Bangladesh as elsewhere in the world on helping people adapt to the impact of global climate change. I'm going to ask Janina in a moment to speak to some of the specific programs we do to help Bangladesh combat climate change.

On the specific question of water flows between India and Bangladesh, this would be an issue for bilateral discussion between India and Bangladesh.

Director Jaruzelski: Just to supplement a little the answer that the Ambassador already gave, and thank you very much for raising this question. We agree completely that global climate change

and preparing for its impact are critically important. For that reason global climate change programs and preparedness programs are one of the largest portions of USAID's programming here and of our budget. We deal with this under two headings. Global climate change programs specifically, and also disaster preparedness and resiliency. For example the SHOUHARDO here in Rangpur specifically, the SHOUHARDO program that I already mentioned, that's a program that has many different components.

I spoke earlier about the women's empowerment component. But the bulk of the program is focused on preparation for disaster and how to live with a changing environment. So specifically in Rangpur, how to live with the impact of frequent flooding and huge amounts of water coming in. Through SHOUHARDO we are building a flood shelter for people to take refuge in, and we are also introducing crops that can grow in lands that have been flooded.

Thanks again for raising that very important issue.

Question: [Through Interpreter]. You went to the U.S. to participate in a meeting of Chiefs of Missions recently, so what is the U.S. Government's perspective on this particular election that was held in Jan 5?

Ambassador Mozena: I've already answered that question.

Question: [Through Interpreter]. He said that extrajudicial killings and human rights issues, so what are your stance on the issues of human rights, disappearances and extrajudicial killings? Are you going to stop providing support to RAB? Are you going to start it all over again or not?

Ambassador Mozena: These human rights issues that you raise are very much of concern to us. I refer you to the annual Human Rights Report that was just released. The Bangla version came out last week or the week before. In that report we expressed our concerns about such developments and call on the government to undertake investigations, transparent investigations to ascertain the circumstances.

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