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REMARKS BY

U.S. AMBASSADOR TO BANGLADESH DAN MOZENA

AT THE BANGLADESH FROZEN FOOD EXPORTERS ASSOCIATION DINNER

KHULNA, MAY 9, 2012

Good and gracious friends from BFFEA.

Thank you for the kind invitation for Grace, members of my delegation and me to join you this evening for good discussion on the frozen foods industry and for a lovely dinner.

I want to share with you my vision of the New Bangladesh, the Golden Bangladesh, the Middle-income Bangladesh, the Bangladesh that brings a good quality of life ... prosperity, ample nutritious food, good health, education opportunities, safe shelter ... for all Bangladeshis.

I dream of a Bangladesh that is a global economic powerhouse, commensurate with its size as the world's seventh most populous country.

I envision a Bangladesh that is the world's largest exporter of readymade garments, the world's largest exporter of household textiles and a major global player in building small freighters, harnessing information technology, producing generic drugs, manufacturing finished leather goods, producing and processing silk, and unleashing the potential of that wondrous product jute.

All this is feasible ... read the McKenzie Report, look at the Goldman Sachs assessment of the rising Eleven Economies, talk to young business people ... the Golden Bangladesh of our dreams is possible.

Of course, the constraints are real ... you know them well ... limitations of the port, inadequate roads and railroads, insufficient power and energy supplies, corruption, lack of strong rule of law, and the specter of political instability. As you know better than I, these constraints are real, but each one, each one is surmountable. None is impossible to resolve.

I wonder how the frozen foods industry fits into this vision of the Golden Bangladesh. Already you export frozen shrimp and fish worth over \$600 million a year; already you directly engage over 600,000 people, and hundreds of thousands of small-scale shrimp producers also benefit from the industry. So this industry is already an important player in Bangladesh's economy.

But does it have the potential to grow hugely, to generate hundreds of thousands of more jobs, to generate exports from Bangladesh worth billions, to help build the Middle-income Bangladesh?

A friend of mine in the frozen shrimp business told me a week ago that Thai shrimp growers annually harvest more than 20 times the shrimp per acre than here in Bangladesh. He said Bangladesh shrimp growers could close the gap with improved shrimp production methods. To the extent that what he said is true, and I have no idea whether it is, this would bode well for expanding shrimp production and creating needed new processing jobs.

In the end, of course, the future of the frozen foods industry is really up to you. Are you, the exporters, able to help growers produce shrimp more efficiently? Are you able to reach and sustain the highest quality standards? Are you able to brand Bangladesh shrimp as fair labor trade, meaning no child labor, less contract labor, good safety conditions, a proper working environment, fair wages, and recognition of workers' right to organize?

Your businesses are only as strong as the men and women who work for them. When you have confident and secure workers, your businesses will also thrive. I urge you to work with labor as a partner rather than as an adversary. Your product would certainly have even greater value if branded "fair labor trade."

Of course, the industry has progressed on many of these fronts. I hope that it will push even harder so that the brand Bangladesh Shrimp takes on great meaning and value in international markets.

I am pleased that America helped develop and nurture the shrimp industry, beginning in 2001. Our objectives then, as today, were quality product, fair treatment of labor, and respect for the environment. It was a winning combination a decade ago; it's a winning combination today.

So, that's the question I leave on the table: To what extent will the frozen foods industry contribute to building the Golden Bangladesh?

Again, thank you for hosting this most delightful and informative evening.

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Prepared for delivery

GR/ 2012