

TAX REBATE FOR BANGLADESH COMPANIES HIRING TRANSGENDER PEOPLE



Bangladesh has declared a tax rebate for companies hiring transgender people to boost the government's social inclusion efforts for marginalized groups. Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal proposed to enact special tax incentives to provide employment and ensure a rise in living standards and social and economic integration of the transgender members on 03 July 2021, as he unveiled the national budget for the 2021-22 financial year. The minister said the companies would enjoy a five percent tax rebate or a refund of 75 percent of trans employees' salaries if 10 percent of their total workforce, or 100 workers, were transgender members. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government has since 2013 allowed transgender people to be identified as a separate gender, and in 2018 they were allowed to register to vote as a third gender.

BANGLADESH FOREIGN MINISTER VISITS CONSULATE GENERAL IN NEW YORK

Foreign Minister Dr. A.K. Abdul Momen, on 16 June, visited the Bangladesh Consulate General, New York, and observed various types of consular services being provided there. Lawmaker Shamim Osman, MP, accompanied the Foreign Minister during his visit to the consulate general. Dr. Momen provided guidance to the consulate officials and advised them to ensure quality services to the expatriate Bangladeshis as part of the current government's expatriate-friendly policy. At that time, the Foreign Minister spoke to the consular service seekers and expressed his satisfaction with the service quality of the Consulate. The Foreign Minister arrived in New York on an official visit on 13 June 2021. Ambassador of Bangladesh to the US M. Shahidul Islam received the Foreign Minister at JFK airport.



US AMBASSADOR EARL MILLER CALLED ON STATE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS MD. SHAHRIAR ALAM



The US Ambassador in Bangladesh Earl R. Miller called on State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md. Shahriar Alam on 17 May in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They exchanged views on global and bilateral issues, including launching the annual Joint Response Plan (JRP) for the humanitarian operations for displaced Rohingyas, the Israel-Palestine conflict, the COVID situation, and the vaccine issue. State Minister Alam urged the US to take a proactive role in stopping the bloodshed in Palestine immediately. He also reiterated Bangladesh's support for the two-state solution. Furthermore, Bangladesh State Minister for Foreign Affairs urged for providing timely visa interview slots for Bangladeshi students intending to go to the US for studies, observing that many students are facing difficulties. The US Ambassador assured that they were working on resolving the backlog created by the lockdown situation.

BANGLADESH AMBASSADOR CALLS FOR TRANSPARENCY IN VACCINE TRADE

On 15 June 2021, the U.S.-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce hosted Bangladesh Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam at a virtual town hall discussion which was participated by officials of the US Chamber of Commerce, diplomats from the Embassy of Bangladesh in Washington DC, and representatives from various leading companies. Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam highlighted the economic priorities of Bangladesh and emphasized enhanced bilateral cooperation to help overcome economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. He also urged the US authorities to consider a tax moratorium on products from Bangladesh, particularly RMG, to help the Bangladesh economy. On the vaccine issue, while appreciating the US donation of vaccines to developing countries, the Ambassador opined that commercial procurement of vaccines would play a more critical role in vaccinating a populous country like Bangladesh. He called upon the US vaccine-producing companies to exercise more openness and transparency in the commercial export of vaccines to developing countries.

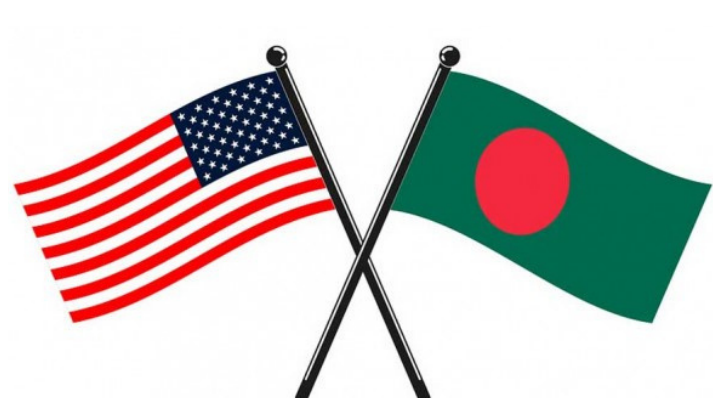


BANGLADESH AMBASSADOR VISITS TRAVIS AIR BASE TO SEE OFF COVID-19 RESPONSE RELIEF TO BANGLADESH



Bangladesh Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam visited the Travis Air Force Base in California on 04 June 2021 to see off first USAID consignment of COVID-19 response medical supplies to Bangladesh. The shipment of the consignment was a part of the USAID's ongoing emergency assistance to countries in South Asia, including Bangladesh, to fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. A US Air Force C-17 special flight departed Travis Air Base bound for Dhaka carrying over 2 million personal protective equipment (PPE) for Bangladesh's healthcare workers. The second such special flight, which departed the Travis Air Base for Dhaka on 08 June 2021, was seen off by Bangladesh Consul General in Los Angeles Tareque Muhammad.

BANGLADESH OPENS NEW CONSULATE GENERAL IN FLORIDA



The Government of Bangladesh will start the operation of the new Consulate General Bangladesh in Florida, soon. Bangladesh Embassy in Washington, DC, is facilitating the opening of the Consulate General, which is expected to have its chancery in Miami in July 2021. With the consular jurisdiction over eight States, the Consulate will help the service seekers from Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Arkansas, South Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee & Mississippi. The new Consulate General, Bangladesh's third in the United States, exemplifies the expanding partnership, including growing commercial and people-to-people ties, between Bangladesh and the USA.

THE U.S. ANNOUNCES DISTRIBUTION OF 25 MILLION COVID-19 VACCINE DOSES

The US Government has announced the donation of 25 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine to some of the affected countries of the world. This includes the distribution of 7 million doses for 16 South and South-East Asian countries, including Bangladesh, through COVAX. The announced 25 million is the first batch of President Joe Biden's earlier committed 80 million doses of vaccine supply to other countries to end the pandemic. The US administration is coordinating with Bangladesh Embassy in Washington DC to send the allocated vaccines to Bangladesh through COVAX as soon as possible.



US-BANGLADESH BUSINESS COUNCIL MOBILIZES COVID-19 MANAGEMENT EQUIPMENT FOR BANGLADESH



The Embassy has been working closely with the US-Bangladesh Business Council for ensuring the supply of some essential COVID-19 management equipment to Bangladesh. The Council has already mobilized support for its initiative with 'Project CURE' to create the first shipment of COVID-19 management material, including Oxygen Concentrators, Variable Positive Air Pressure (VPAP) equipment, and K95 and N95 masks. Relevant details of this shipment are being worked out.

BANGLA NEW YEAR AND EID REUNION CELEBRATED AT BANGLADESH HOUSE

The Bangla New Year-1428 and the Eid Reunion were celebrated at Bangladesh House in Washington DC on 31 May 2021 with befitting enthusiasm and festivity. Laura Stone, State Department's Deputy Assistant Secretary for South Asia, graced the occasion as guest of honor. Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam, in his brief remarks at the event, highlighted socio-economic development taking place in Bangladesh under the dynamic leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. A cultural soiree was organized in which members of the Bangladesh Embassy family presented Bangla songs and dances. The guests were entertained with traditional Bangladeshi cuisine.



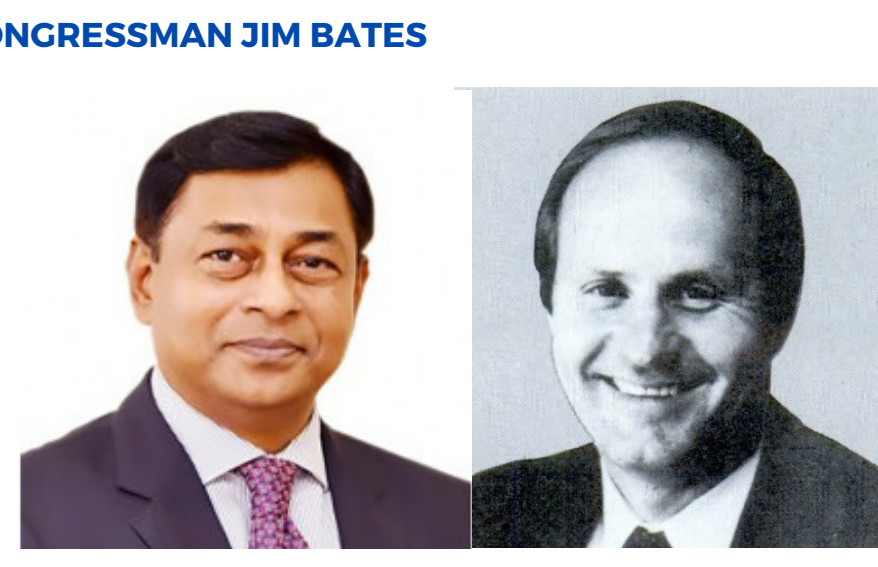
BANGLADESH AMBASSADOR MEETS IT PROFESSIONALS IN SILICON VALLEY



The Consulate General of Bangladesh in Los Angeles organized a business meeting of the Bangladesh Ambassador to the USA with Bangladesh-origin IT professionals based in Silicon Valley, San Jose, on 09 June 2021 in San Francisco, California. The goal of this event was to make the Bangladesh-origin IT professionals aware of the opportunities created in Bangladesh and encourage business and investment in Bangladesh. Managing Director and CEO of Startup Bangladesh, Ms. Tina Jabeen was present at the meeting. Around 30 Bangladeshi American IT professionals and entrepreneurs took part in the program. The meeting was presided by the Consul General, Mr. Tareque Muhammad.

BANGLADESH AMBASSADOR MEETS EX-CONGRESSMAN JIM BATES

Ambassador of Bangladesh to the US, M. Shahidul Islam, met former Congressman Jim Bates, a Democratic politician from San Diego, California who served four terms in the US House of Representatives, on 03 June 2021 at the Bangladesh Consulate in Los Angeles. They discussed the engagement of the Bangladesh diaspora in the development activities in California. The former Congressman offered his support to engage the current congressmen and senators to this end. The Ambassador extended his thanks and gratitude to Jim Bates for his kind offer to support Bangladesh. Consul General Tareque Muhammad was present in the meeting.



BHASAN CHAR TO BECOME ANOTHER EXAMPLE TO THE WORLD: UNGA PRESIDENT



UN General Assembly President Volkan Bozkır has applauded the Bhasan Char project for Rohingya refugees, saying this is an example of humanity for the world. He said this at a press briefing after a bilateral meeting with Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen at the Foreign Service Academy at Dhaka on 25 May. He applauded Bangladesh for its socio-economic progress and sheltering the genocide survivors. Foreign Minister Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen sought more support on climate change and migration issues in a meeting with the UNGA President. The UNGA President appreciated Bangladesh's role in global peacekeeping and described the country as a front-liner that leads in sending personnel in peacekeeping operations.