

16 December 2012: H.E.'s remarks at the Victory Day event

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

আসসালামু আলাইকুম এবং শুভ সন্ধ্যা

সবাইকে বিজয় দিবসের প্রাণঢালা শুভেচ্ছা

আশা করি আপনারা সবাই ভাল আছেন। দূতাবাসের বিজয় দিবস উদ্‌যাপনের এই মূহুর্তে আপনাদেরকে আমাদের সাথে পেয়ে আমরা বিশেষভাবে আনন্দিত।

Victory day is about celebrating the most decisive moment of our nation's thousand years of history. This came as the fruit of an endless sacrifice. I pay my homage to the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at whose clarion call our unarmed civilians stood up against one of the world's most atrocious bunch of invading militaries. I pay my tribute to all freedom fighters-martyred, war-wounded and alive. I also pay my deepest respect to our mothers and sisters who lost dignity to the invading force and its local collaborators and sympathizers.

The 1971 war was a war imposed by an undemocratic and authoritarian coterie on a peace-loving nation. For seeking a liberal, democratic and secular society, the military decided to silence us completely. Thus the war was inevitable. History's judgement was, as our supreme leader put it in this most famous speech of 7 March 1971 "You can't stop us when we have known how to die". The entire world had seen with great sympathy how our people made supreme sacrifices in quest of freedom and justice.

A lot of US nationals and politicians came out of their cold war politics and stood beside us. We are happy that; though belatedly, we could honour some of our foreign friends; a number of whom are also from the USA. It is in the same spirit of justice that the present democratic government in Bangladesh as per its electoral pledge has brought

some of the key individuals, allegedly involved in war crimes, to the path of justice.

Our expatriates are never detached from their near and dear ones back in Bangladesh. Your enthusiasm and presence in today's event truly inspires us. At this moment of joy I can remind that your motherland counts on your valuable ideas and enterprise for its emergence as a forward looking and globally integrated country. Your good contributions to your host societies lend a tremendous credit to us as a nation rich in talents.

You all would agree that 41 years is not a big timeline in a nation's development journey. We inherited a war ravaged infrastructure with virtually zero deposit in the Central Bank. Neither did we have abundant natural resources. On face of an uphill task to rebuild a small country healing from a bloody birth, the only visible capital we had was the resilience of our people. Bangladesh today is not just better-off than an international basket case. World leaders praise us as a role model nation and a success story for remarkable progress in a host of human development indices. The indomitable nature of our people made it possible.

Our economy had an average growth rate of 6 percent for the last one decade or so. It is expected that if some age old infrastructure related bottlenecks could be addressed, Bangladesh has all the prospect to be one of the major business hubs in Asia. If we manage to attract foreign investment up to the true potentials and grow the economy at the expected double digit rate, the Bangladesh that would celebrate its golden jubilee of the victory would no more carry the profile of a least developed nation. The government of Hon. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is absolutely serious in chasing that dream.

As we celebrate the victory day in presence of our colleagues from the State Department and Excellencies and representatives from other embassies, I feel emboldened to reiterate that the USA is one of Bangladesh's key partners in foreign relations. USA is Bangladesh's single largest export destination and source of overseas investment. It is estimated that annually 10 thousand jobs are generated in the USA through its economic activities with Bangladesh. We have

reasons to believe that if our ties flourish up to the actual potentials, this employment figure would be a mere tip of the iceberg. We successfully held our first ever partnership dialogue and hope that the future rounds would pave the way for a deeper tie in multiple sectors.

Bangladesh's role in global peacekeeping is now well acclaimed. Presently Bangladesh is the largest contributor of peacekeepers to the UN missions deployed across the world. When a remote village in Sierra Leone impresses the world with its capacity to communicate in Bangla, our export basket gains an enviable item named **SMART POWER**.

The Greek historian and essayist Plutarch once spoke of the great military commander Hannibal that the commander knew only how to gain a victory but not how to use it. Surely like other victorious nations the red letter day also takes Bangladesh to a point of reflection. While reflecting, I expect, tonight's gifts from our embassy family and talented members of the diaspora would also be motivational. I thank them for selecting some of the most melodious and timeless pieces cantering on the liberation war, and hope, you all would enjoy these.

I thank you all for your participation in the victory day celebrations.

Thank you.