Bangladesh
A Nation on the March
Commemorative publication on the occasion of 43rd Anniversary of the Independence and National Day of Bangladesh-2014

Bangladesh High Commission, Canberra
Message of the President

On the eve of our great Independence and National Day, I extend my heartfelt greetings and felicitations to the fellow countrymen living at home and abroad.

The great Independence Day is a glorious one in our national life. We achieved our long-cherished independence through a nine-month long armed struggle and manifold forbearance and patience. Today, I recall with deep gratitude the heroic martyrs who made supreme sacrifices in achieving our independence. On this historic day, I recall with profound respect Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who proclaimed country’s independence despite myriad challenges and odds. I also recall with deep reverence our four National Leaders; valiant freedom-fighters, organizers, supporters and people from all walks of life for their unmatched contributions and courageous role that accelerated the achievement of our victory. The contributions of those valiant sons would be written in golden letters in the history of our independence forever.

One of the prime objectives of our hard-earned independence was to build a happy and prosperous Bangladesh. Keeping that in mind, the Government has been putting untiring efforts in materializing the objectives of independence. We have been achieved some significant progress in the fields of agriculture, education, health, rural infrastructure, communication, energy and power, trade & commerce, ICT, SME, youth & sports, women and children, women empowerment, etc. in our national life. At the same time we have also attained notable development in private sector including the area of readymade garments, pharmaceuticals, ceramic and ship-building industry.
The Government is also very sincere to establish the rule of law, human rights in the country. Our achievement in international arena is also commendable. Bangladeshi Peacekeepers, under the auspices of the United Nations, have brightened the country’s image abroad by presenting their professionalism and competence. Our expatriate Bangladeshis have also been making significant contributions to our national economy through sending their hard-earned foreign currencies. Nevertheless, we have to go a long way for achieving the desired goals of independence and building a happy and prosperous Bangladesh. I believe concerted efforts from all strata irrespective of party affiliation are imperative in this regard.

The people of our country are democratic and peace loving. They reject all sorts of violence including militancy and terrorism with abhorrence. It is imperative that the overall development of the country is not possible without the flourish and institutionalization of democracy. Tolerance, fortitude and mutual respect are the preconditions for thriving democracy. Therefore, we have to maintain patience, self-restraint, forbearance along with showing respect to others’ opinion in a democratic pluralism. Let us make our Jatiya Sangsad a centre of excellence in resolving our national issues through discussion. I am confident that everyone would play one’s responsible role in fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of our people. The present Government has declared ‘Vision 2021’ for attaining ‘Golden Bangla’ dreamt by Bangabandhu. It is my conviction that through implementing the ‘Vision’ people from all strata would contribute to build an IT-based happy and prosperous Bangladesh from their respective position by the golden jubilee celebration of our independence.

On this auspicious day of independence, I urge all living at home and abroad, to work unitedly imbued with the spirit of War of Liberation in order to expedite overall development and democratic advancement of the country.

Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Md. Abdul Hamid
President
Message of the Prime Minister

I convey my heartiest greetings to my countrymen as well as to all expatriate Bangalees on the occasion of the great Independence and National Day of Bangladesh.

The 26th March is the day of earning self-identity; it’s a day of breaking the shackles of subjugation. On this auspicious occasion of the Independence day, I pay my deep homage to the greatest Bangalee of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, under whose dynamic leadership we earned our great independence.

I recall with deep gratitude the 3 million martyrs and 200 thousand women who lost their innocence in the War of Liberation in 1971. We earned our desired victory through their supreme sacrifices.

I also pay my humble tributes to four national leaders who led the liberation war. I pay my respect to the valiant freedom fighters, including the war wounded ones. I extend my sympathies to those who had lost their near and dear ones, and were subjected to brutal torture. I recall with gratitude our foreign friends who had extended their whole-hearted support and cooperation to our liberation war.

The Pakistani occupation forces started massacring innocent and unarmed Bangalees launching sudden attack on the black night of the 25th March, 1971. The Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman proclaimed the independence of Bangladesh at the first hour of the 26th March. Bangabandhu’s proclamation was spread all over the country through telegrams, tele-printers and the wireless of the then EPR. The proclamation was also circulated in international media.

Earlier on the 7th of March at Suhrawardy Udyan, Bangabandhu made a fervent call for waging independence struggle. He declared: this time the struggle is for our freedom; this time the struggle is for our independence. He directed the Bangalee nation to resist the enemy. The ultimate victory was earned on the 16th December after the 9-month bloody war carried out under the directives of Bangabandhu.
The independence earned through the sacrifice of millions of people is the greatest achievement of Bangalee nation. To make the achievement meaningful, all would have to know the true history of the liberation war, retain the spirit of the independence. It would have to be spread from generation to generations.

We are celebrating this year’s Independence and National Day in a new perspective. The countrymen have given opportunity to Awami League again to serve the nation through the January 5 elections. We would definitely protect the dignity of the people’s confidence reposed on us.

During the last five years, we accomplished massive developments in every sector of the socio-economic front. Our target is to turn Bangladesh into a middle-income country by the year 2021 and a developed one within the year 2041. We have relentlessly been working to realise the target. Side by side, the execution of the verdicts of the war criminals trials has started. We are committed to reaching the fruits of independence to the doorsteps of the people.

The conspiracy of the anti-liberation communal and anti-democratic forces is continuing to ruin the constitution, democracy and development activities of the government. On this auspicious day, I urge the countrymen to face any ill-attempt against the independence, democracy and anti-country activities.

I hope every Bangalee imbued with the mantra of patriotism would engage themselves from their respective positions and with the highest sincerity, dedication and honesty to turn Bangladesh into a peaceful, non-communal and middle-income country at the Golden Jubilee of Bangladesh. Bangladesh would be established as a dignified nation in the comity of nations.

Let us come and build a Sonar Bangla as dreamt by the Father of the Nation being imbued with ideals of liberation war. This is our fresh vow on this great day.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Sheikh Hasina
Prime Minister
On the occasion of the 43rd anniversary of the Independence and National Day, I convey my heartfelt greetings and felicitations to my compatriots living at home and abroad. On this memorable day, I recall with profound respect the greatest Bangalee of all times and Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who proclaimed independence in the early hours of March 26, 1971. Responding to his clarion call, people from all walks of life participated in the War of Liberation and achieved victory on the 16th December, 1971. On this day, I pay my deep homage to the three million martyrs who laid down their lives in the War of Liberation in 1971. I pray to the Almighty Allah for the salvation of those departed souls. I also remember the quarter of a million mothers and sisters who sacrificed their honour for the sake of freedom for Bangladesh.

It all began with the assertion of a national identity in the face of systematic denial, discrimination and deprivation of an identity rooted in a millennia-old heritage of language, culture and customs. It evolved through the shaping of political demands for inclusion and equal access to opportunities, against all forms of exploitation of the Bangalee people. It was crystallized into the 6-point programme put forward by Bangabandhu for the emancipation of our people. Then landslide victory of the Awami League in the general elections of December 1970 and the Pakistani military government’s refusal to hand over power led to the non-co-operation movement culminating in the declaration of independence by Bangabandhu. After the tragic events of 15 August, 1975, when Bangabandhu was killed along with most members of his family, Bangladesh lapsed into a long period of military dictatorships and the people under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina had to wage another battle for the restoration of democracy.

After restoration of democracy, Sheikh Hasina was elected to office in 1996. She started from where Bangabandhu had left, and once again the country was restored to a place of honour among the comity of nations. During her
first term (1996-2001), Bangladesh marched ahead in many fields. The country witnessed remarkable progress at home and earned global recognition as well. Following her landslide victory in the December 2008 elections, Bangladesh made major strides during the second term (2009-2013) specially in the social sector such as reduction of maternity and child mortality rate, revolution in the education sector particularly at the primary level, empowerment of women, development of infrastructure and power generation. The impressive performance of the Government helped earn international recognition and Bangladesh was cited as a role model in many fields. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s tremendous success in the betterment of the lives of the common people led to her re-election in the last elections held on 5 January, 2014.

Hon’ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina aims at a middle-income, digital knowledge based Vision of Bangladesh by 2021. On the international front, we have demonstrated our goal and ability to forge partnerships with our neighbours and beyond. We are deeply involved in the process of multilateralism, through global and regional commitments. But the defeated anti-liberation, communal and irredentist forces are trying to destabilize the democratic and development process. We are however determined to end the culture of impunity. The government remains pledge-bound to bring to justice all the crimes committed against humanity during the War of Liberation in 1971. We urge the international community to extend their support and cooperation for this just cause.

On this very day, I take this opportunity to thank all our officers and staff at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and our Missions abroad who have devoted themselves to achieving our foreign policy objectives. I also congratulate the Bangladesh Diaspora who have contributed greatly to the buoyancy of the economy of their country of origin as well as to further development of their host countries.

Today, Bangladesh is marching ahead in all fields under the leadership of our dear leader, Bangabandhu’s daughter, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. On this great Day, I urge all to work unitedly imbued with the spirit of War of Liberation to expedite economic self-reliance and democratic advancement of the country for the realisation of Bangabandhu’s dream of Sonar Bangla-Golden Bengal.

Joy Bangla
Joy Bangabandhu.

Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, MP
Foreign Minister
Today we celebrate the 43rd glorious independence of Bangladesh. On this day, Bangladesh woke up to the horrendous genocide unknown to the Bangladeshis. This darkest episode in our history turned into a full-fledged people’s war which helped us become a sovereign country. The heroic struggles of our freedom fighters against the enemy, their sacrifices and their ultimate success in defeating the enemies made us hold our heads high.

On this historic occasion, I express my heartfelt felicitation and greetings to my compatriots living at home and abroad. On this solemn day, I recall with deep respect the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who led the great war of independence in 1971. I pay my deep homage to the martyrs who made supreme sacrifices to liberate the country. I also recall the brave women who sacrificed their honour only to see the country free from subjugation. I also recall with deep respect our four National Leaders who had a great role in our epic struggle. The contributions of those valiant freedom fighters of the soil would be borne in the minds of the people of Bangladesh forever.

Cherishing the true history of the liberation war, the present government has made giant strides to achieve the objective of a change which will make Bangabandhu’s ‘Sonar Bangla’ a reality. Under the dynamic leadership of the Hon’ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, we aim at a middle-income, digital, knowledge-based Bangladesh by 2021.

Bangladesh remains committed to bring to an end to the culture of impunity and establish the rule of law. The present government will bring all the perpetrators to justice who committed crimes against humanity. No one can deviate us from this auratious task as people have given us the mandate.

At the international front, Bangladesh follows the foreign policy principle “Friendship to all and enmity to none” as outlined by the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. In line with that, Bangladesh has been playing a constructive role in promoting international peace and stability. Ministry remains deeply focused on sub-regional, regional and international issues apart from its bilateral engagements.

I express my appreciation to the expatriates Bangladesh nationals who are continuously contributing to building an economically viable Bangladesh. I also congratulate the officers and officials working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and at Bangladesh Missions abroad for their dedicated services to implement the foreign policy objectives of the government. On this great occasion, I urge all to work unitedly to turn Bangladesh into a ‘Sonar Bangla’ as envisioned by the Father of the Nation and achieve middle income country status by 2021 as set out by Hon’ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Joy Bangladesh Joy Bangabandhu

Md. Shohjir Alam, MP
Message of the High Commissioner

On this glorious occasion of the 43rd Independence and National Day of Bangladesh, I express my heartfelt congratulations and warm greetings to expatriate Bangladeshi nationals living in Australia, New Zealand and Fiji. Let us, on this historic day join together to pay our deep homage to the three million martyrs who had laid down their lives for securing a long cherished dream of a nationhood of our own and a place in the world map.

On this happy occasion I would like to express our sincere gratitude to Australia for her unequivocal support during our War of Liberation. Australia was the first developed country to recognize Bangladesh after its independence. W.A. S Ouderland, an Australian citizen was the only foreign national to receive a gallantry award for his valiant role in our freedom struggle. The library of the Bangladesh High Commission in Canberra has been dedicated to the memory of this great friend of Bangladesh.

On this historic day I pay my highest respect to the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and all other leaders who have led the Nation to achieve our Independence through a glorious War of Liberation in 1971. I salute and pay my deep homage to all the valiant freedom fighters who made supreme sacrifices and presented us the Independent Bangladesh. My respect is to all those millions of people who withstood all the sufferings yet supported the War of Liberation. I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to all those foreign nationals who contributed in our War of Liberation in various ways.

On this day I would urge upon all the members of Bangladesh Community to continue their valuable support to accelerate the socio-economic developments of our beloved motherland, and with your continued support I sincerely believe, Bangladesh will find its place as a dignified, democratic and secular country in the world.

Lieutenant General Masud Uddin Chowdhury (Retd)
High Commissioner
Art, Culture and History of Bangladesh

Ranjit Kumar Biswas, ndc, PhD
Secretary, Ministry of Cultural Affairs

Bangladesh is unique of its kind on lot many scores. For its independence ten million people took shelter in the neighboring country, India in the form of exodus; three million embraced martyrdom; millions shed their blood and sacrificed in different shades, scales and degrees. In addition chastity of 0.3 million women were violated. History has no precedence of these. Following the emergence in 1971 the country forms part of the ancient and historic region of Bengal in the Eastern part of the Indian subcontinent. From then on and till date, the country, though quagmired on occasions for different reasons is progressing with tangible pace. The civilization of the country dates back over four millennia, to the Copper Age. The history of the region in closely interwoven with the history of Bengal and that of India.

British India was partitioned and the independent states of India and Pakistan were created in 1947; the region of Bengal was divided along religious lines. The predominantly Muslim eastern half of Bengal became the East Bengal (later renamed East Pakistan) state of Pakistan and the predominantly Hindu western part became the Indian state of West Bengal.

Pakistan’s history from 1947 to 1971 was marked by political instability and economic difficulties. In 1956 a constitution was at last adopted, making the country an “Islamic republic within the Commonwealth”. The nascent democratic institutions foundered in the face of military intervention in 1958, and the government imposed martial law between 1958 and 1962 and again between 1969 and 1971. Almost from the advent of independent Pakistan in 1947, frictions developed between East and west Pakistan, which were separated by more than 1,000 miles of Indian Territory. East Pakistanis felt exploited by the west Pakistan-dominated central government. Linguistic, cultural, and ethnic differences also contributed to the estrangement of East from West Pakistan.

The Bengali Language Movement also known as the Language Movement *Bhasha Andolon*, was a political effort in Bangladesh (then known as East Pakistan), advocating the recognition of the Bengali language as an official language of Pakistan. Such recognition would allow Bengali to be used in government affairs.

When the state of Pakistan was formed in 1947, its two regions, East Pakistan (also called East Bengal) and West Pakistan, were split along cultural, geographical, and linguistic lines. In 1948, the Government of Pakistan ordained Urdu as the sole national language, sparking extensive
protests among the Bengali-speaking majority of East Pakistan. The students of the University of Dhaka and other political activists defied the law and organized a protest on 21 February 1952. The movement reached its climax when police killed student demonstrators on that day. The deaths provoked widespread civil unrest led by the Awami Muslim League, later renamed the Awami League. After years of conflict, the central government relented and granted official status to the Bengali language in 1956.

The Language Movement catalyzed the assertion of Bengali national identity in Pakistan, and became a forerunner to Bengali nationalist movements, including the 6-point movement and subsequently the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. In Bangladesh, 21 February is observed as *Language Movement Day*, a national holiday. The Shaheed Minar monument was constructed near Dhaka Medical College in memory of the movement and its victims.

After the Awami League under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who later through the overwhelming and unequivocal support of the people became Father of the Nation, won all the East Pakistan seats of the Pakistan’s National Assembly in the 1970-71 elections, West Pakistan opened talks with the East on constitutional questions about the division of power between the central government and the provinces, as well as the formation of a national government headed by the Awami League. The Talks proved unsuccessful, however, and on March 1, 1971, Pakistani Yahya Khan indefinitely postponed the pending National Assembly session, precipitating massive civil disobedience in East Pakistan. On March 7, there was a historical public gathering in Paltan Maidan to hear the guideline for the revolution and independence from Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the frontier leader of movement that time. Although he avoided the direct speech of independence as the talks were still underway, he influenced the mob to prepare for the separation war. The speech in still considered a key moment in the war of liberation, and is remembered for the phrase, “Ebarer Shongram Muktir Shongram, Ebarer Shongram Shadhinotar Shongram...” (“This time, the revolution in for freedom; this time, the revolution is for liberation...”). After the military crackdown by the Pakistan army began during the early hours of March 26, 1971 Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was arrested and the political leaders dispersed, mostly fleeing to neighbouring India where they organized a provisional government afterwards. Before being held up by the Pakistani Army Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman gave a hand note of the declaration of the independence of Bangladesh and it was circulated amongst people and transmitted by the then East Pakistan Rifles wireless transmitter. The Provisional Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh was formed on April 10 in Meherpur, (later renamed as Mujibnagar a place adjacent to the Indian border). Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibhur Rahman was announced to be the head of the state. Tajuddin Ahmed became the prime minister of the government. Saiyed Nojrul Islam
became the acting president. There the war plan was sketched with armed forces established named “Muktifoujo”. Later it was named “Muktibahini” (freedom fighters). M. A. G. Osmani was assigned as the Chief of the force. The land sketched into 11 sectors under 11 commanders.

Archite4cture and Heritage

The cultural heritage of Bangladesh is evinced in the various forms like small artifacts of prehistoric people of remote past as well as gigantic monuments like monastery of historical era. We find the vestiges of the Neolithic hunter-gatherers, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and Christians. Also the country has a number of small ethnic community and they have their own culture and heritage. So this multifarious heritage undoubtedly testifies the richness of our colorful history

Though these cultural remains spread all over the country but its northern and eastern portions are rich in the earliest evidence. The recently formed alluvial deposition of southern part possesses comparatively less amount of ancient culture. The earliest evidence of human habitation comes from Chagalnayya in Feni, Sitakundu Hill in Chittagong, Chunarughta in Sylhet and Lalmal-Mainamati Range in Comilla. These sites have yielded the Neolithic artifacts of fossil wood.

Of the historical age the earliest remains comes from Mahasthan in Bogra district and Wari-Bateshar in Narshingdi district. The Extensive ruins of Mahasthanganar represent Pundranagar, the provincial capital of Pundravardhan bhukti, was established by the Mauryans in the 3rd century B.C.E., over the earlier remains of 4th/5th century B.C.E. The city was in flourishing stage in the succeeding periods of the Guptas, the Senas and the Muslims. The twin village Wari-Batashar in the district of Narsingdi has yielded artifacts of petrified wood of prehistoric era and a large variety of cultural objects including water reservoirs, small rooms, Northern Black Polished Wares, punched marked silver coins, iron glums and weapons and semi-precious stone beads of early historic period.

The most imposing Buddhist monument is the gigantic monastery at Paharpur known as Sompur Mahavihara in Naogaon district. Thes second largest single monastery south of the Himalayas was erected by Dharmapala, the great Pala emperor, in the 8th century A.C.E. A series of similar but less extensive monasteries and stupas have been exposed at Salban Vihara, Ananda Vihara, Rupban Mura,Itakhola Mura, Charpatra Mura and the Tri-ratna Stupas at kotila Mura in the Lalmal-Mainamati hill range in Comilla, at Bihar and Vasu Bihar near Mahasthan and at Sitakot in Dinajpur , and Harish Chandra Rajar Bari at Savar near Dhaka.

Apart from these building remains, numerous movable objects have been discovered from the excavation as well as surface finds from different corners
of the country. A series of stone sculptures of Visnu, Siva, Ganesha, Durga and other Brahminical images of varying sizes discovered from different corners of the country show a great development of Hindu art during Sena period.

The remains of the Muslim period, covering more a five centuries may broadly be divided into two distinct phases: the pre-Mughal and the Mughal. Notable among them are a series of massively built mosques and tombs within the old city of Khalifatabad, presently known as Bagerhat, in the south, founded by a saint ruler, known as Ulugh Khan Jahan in the 15th century A.C.E. The city plan centers around a magnificently built 77 domed mosque, popularly known as the ‘Shait-Gumbad Masjid’ which is the largest of its kind. Numerous massive buildings in the city like Bibi Begni Mosque, Singar Mosque, Chunakhola Mosque, Khan Jahan’s Tomb, Nine-domed Mosque and Ranavijaypur Mosque, bear a striking resemblance to the more famous Tughlaq architecture.

Among 448 sites enlisted as national heritage the ruins of the Buddhist Vihara at Paharpur and Historic Mosque City of Bagerhat have been inscribed on the World Heritage list by UNESCO. Besides these sites like Halud Vihara, Jaggadala Vihara, Lalbagh Fort, Mahasthanagarh and its Environs, The Lalmai-Mainamati Group of Monuments are included in the Tentative list of the World Heritage. Bangladesh is going to propose for inclusion of Bangladesh National Parliament Bhaban in the tentative list of cultural heritage sites.

**Art and Literature**

Bangladesh has a rich tradition of Art. Specimens of ancient terracota and pottery show remarkable artistry. Modern painting was pioneered by artists like Zainul Abedin, Qamrul Hasan, Anwarul Hague, Shafiuddin Ahnied, Shafiqul Amin, Rashid Chowdhury and S.M. Sultan. Zainul Abedin earned worldwide fame by his stunning sketches of the Bengal Famine in 1943.

Other famous artists of Bangladesh are Abdur Razzak, Qayyum Chowdhury, Murtaza Baseer, Aminul Islam, Debdas Chakraborty, Kazi Abdul Baset, Syed Jahangir, and Mohammad Kibria. The earliest available specimen of Bengali literature is about a thousand years old. During the mediaeval period, Bengali Literature developed considerably with the patronage of Muslim rulers. Chandi Das, Daulat Kazi and Alaol are some of the famous poets of the period. The era of modern Bengali Literature began in the late nineteenth century Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel Laureate is a vital part of Bangalee culture. Kazi Nazrul Islam, Michael Madhusudan Datta. Sarat Chandra
Chattopadhaya, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhaya, Mir Mosharraf Hossain and Kazi Abdul Wadud are the pioneers of modern Bengali Literature.

**Festivals and Celebrations**

Festivals and celebrations have always played a significant role in the life of the citizens of this country. They derive from them a great amount of joy, entertainment and color for life. While most of the festivals have sprung from religious rituals, the fairs have their roots in the very heart of the people, irrespective of religion, caste or creed.

**Pohela Boishakh** is the first day of the Bengali calendar. It is usually celebrated on the 14th of April. Pohela Boishakh marks the start day of the crop season. Fairs are arranged in many parts of the country where various agricultural products, traditional handicrafts, toys, cosmetics, as well as various kinds of food and sweets are sold. The fairs also provide entertainment, with singers, dancers and traditional plays and songs. *Panta Ilish* — a traditional platter of *Panta bhat*, with fried ilish slice, supplemented with dried fish (*shuhti*), pickles (*achar*), dal, chillies, and onion — is a popular dish during the Pohela Boishakh festival.

**Victory Day** - 16 December is the Victory Day. The celebration of Victory Day has taken place since 1972. The Bangladesh Liberation War became a topic of great importance in cinema, literature, history lessons at school, the mass media, and the arts in Bangladesh. The ritual of the celebration gradually obtained a distinctive character with a number of similar elements: Military Parade by Bangladesh Armed Forces at the National Parade Ground, ceremonial meetings, speeches, lectures, receptions and fireworks. TV and radio stations broadcast special programs and patriotic songs. The main streets are decorated with national flags. Different political parties and socioeconomic organizations undertake programs to mark the day in a befitting manner, including the paying of respects at Jatiyo Smriti Soudho, the national memorial at Savar near Dhaka.

**21st Feb, the National Mourning Day and World Mother Language Day** is observed throughout the country to pay respect and homage to the sacred souls of the martyrs' of Language Movement of 1952. Blood was shed on this day at the Central Shahid Minar (near Dhaka Medical College Hospital) area to establish Bangla as a state language of the then Pakistan. All subsequent movements including struggle for independence owe their origin to the historic language movement. The Shahid Minar (martyrs monument) is the symbol of
sacrifice for Bangla, the mother tongue. The day is closed holiday. Mourning procedure begin in Dhaka at midnight with the song Amar vaier raktay rangano ekushay February (21st February, the day stained with my brothers' blood). Nationals pay homage to the martyrs by placing floral wreaths at the Shahid Minar. The day has been declared World Mother Language Day by UNESCO.

Eid-e-Miladunnabi is the birth and death day of Prophet Muhammad (s). He was born and died the same day on 12th Rabiul Awal (Lunar Month). The day is national holiday, national flag is flown atop public and private houses and special food is served in orphanages, hospitals and jails. At night important public buildings are illuminated and milad mahfils are held.

Eid ul-Fitr is the biggest Muslim festival observed throughout the world. It has become an integral part of the culture of Bangladesh. This is held on the day following the Ramadan or the month of fasting. Big congregations are held at the Eidgah (open fields) and mosques in the morning. On this day people visit each other's houses and eat sweet dishes. It gives an opportunity for family get together as well as arranging social gatherings in both urban and rural areas.

Eid ul-Adha is the most important religion festival. The celebration of Eid ul-Adha is similar to Eid ul-Fitr in many ways. The only big difference is the Qurbani or sacrifice of domestic animals on Eid ul-Adha. In the morning on the Eid day, immediately after the prayer, affluent people slaughter their animal of choice. Less affluent people also take part in the festivity by visiting houses of the affluent who are taking part in qurbani. After the qurbani, a large portion of the meat is given to the poor people. Many people from the big cities go to their ancestral houses and homes in the villages to share the joy of the festival with friends and relatives.

Muharram procession is a ceremonial mournful procession of Muslim community. A large procession is brought out from the Hussaini Dalan Imambara on 10th Muharram in memory of the tragic martyrdom of Imam Hussain (RA) on this day at Karbala in Iraq. Same observations are made elsewhere in the country.

Durga Puja, the biggest festival of the Hindu community continues for ten days, the last three days being culmination with the idol immersed in rivers. In Dhaka the big celebrations are held at Dhakeswari Temple, where a fair is also held and at the Ram Krishna Mission.
Christmas, popularly called "Bara Din (Big Day)", is celebrated with pomp in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country. Several day-long large gatherings are held at St. Mary's Cathedral at Ramna, Portuguese Church at Tejgaon, Church of Bangladesh (Protestant) on Johnson Road and Bangladesh Baptist Sangha at Sadarghat Dhaka. Functions include illumination of churches, decorating Christmas tree and other Christian festivities.

Rabindra and Nazrul Jayanti - Birth anniversary of the noble laureate Rabindranath Tagore on 25th Baishakh (May) and that of the National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam on 11th Jaystha (May) are observed throughout the country. Their death anniversaries are also marked in the same way. Big gatherings and song sessions organized by socio-cultural organizations are salient features of the observance of the days. Tagore is the writer of our national anthem while National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam is famous as Rebel Poet. There are various other festivals that are habitually observed by Bangalees all the year round.

Music, dance, drama and film
The music and dance styles of Bangladesh may be divided into three categories: classical, folk, and modern. The classical style has been influenced by other prevalent classical forms of music and dances of the Indian subcontinent, and accordingly show some influenced dance forms like Bharata Natyam and Kuchipudi. The folk and tribal music and dance forms of Bangladesh are of indigenous origin and rooted to the soil of Bangladesh. Several dancing styles in vogue in the north-eastern part of the Indian subcontinent, like monipuri and santal dances, are also practiced in Bangladesh, but Bangladesh has developed its own distinct dancing styles. Bangladesh has a rich tradition of folk songs, with lyrics rooted into vibrant tradition and spirituality, mysticism, and devotion. Such folk songs also revolve round several other themes, including love themes. Most prevalent of folk songs and music traditions include Bhatiali, Baul, Marfati, Murshidi, and Bhawaiya. Lyricists like Lalon Shah, Hason Raja, Kangal Harinath, Romesh Shill, Abbas Uddin, and many unknown anonymous lyricists have enriched the tradition of folk songs of Bangladesh.

Dress
Bangladeshi people have unique dress preferences. Bangladeshi men sometimes wear kurta or fatua on religious and cultural occasions. Bangladeshi men wear lungi as casual wear (in rural areas) and shirt-pant or
suits on formal occasions. The lungi is not considered proper to be worn outside the house except by the farmers and the low-income families. Shalwar Kameez and Sharee are the main dresses of Bangladeshi women. The women also have a different preference to which types of Shalwar Kameez and Sharee they would like to wear. Whether it may be silk sharees, georgette sharees, or designer sharees, each particular fabric contributes to representing the culture overall. Weaving the fabric for these dresses is a traditional art in Bangladesh.

**Weddings**

A traditional wedding is arranged by *Ghotoks* (matchmakers), who are typically friends or relatives of the couple. The matchmakers facilitate the introduction, and also help agree the amount of any settlement. Bengali weddings are traditionally in five parts: first it is the bride and groom's *Mehendi Shondha*, the bride's *Gaye Holud*, the groom's *Gaye Holud*, the *Beeya*, and the *Bou Bhaat*. These often take place on separate days. The first event in a wedding is an informal one: the groom presents the bride with a ring marking the "engagement" which is gaining popularity. For the *mehendi shondha* the bride's side apply henna to each other as well as the bride for the bride's Gaye Holud, the groom's family — except the groom himself — go in procession to the bride's home. Bride's friends and family apply turmeric paste to her body as a part of Gaye Holud bride, and they are traditionally all in matching clothes, mostly orange in colour. The bride is seated on a dais, and the henna is used to decorate the bride's hands and feet with elaborate abstract designs. The sweets are then fed to the bride by all involved, piece by piece. The actual wedding ceremony "Biye" follows the Gaye Holud ceremonies. The wedding ceremony is arranged by the bride's family. On the day, the younger members of the bride's family barricade the entrance to the venue, and demand a sort of admission charge from the groom in return for allowing him to enter. The bride and groom are seated separately, and a *Kazi* (authorized person by the govt. to perform the wedding), accompanied by the parents and a *Wakil* (witness) from each side formally asks the bride for her consent to the union, and then the groom for his. The bride's side of the family tries to play some kind of practical joke on the groom such as stealing the groom's shoe. The reception, also known as *Bou-Bhaat* (reception), is a party given by the groom's family in return for the wedding party. It is typically a much more relaxed affair, with only the second-best wedding outfit being worn.
Cuisine
Bangladesh is famous for its distinctive culinary tradition, delicious food, snacks, and savories. Steamed rice constitutes the staple food, and is served with a variety of vegetables, fried as well with curry, thick lentil soups, fish and meat preparations of mutton, beef, and chicken, and very rarely pork only by certain ethnic minority groups. Sweetmeats of Bangladesh are mostly milk based, and consist of several delights including roshgulla, shondesh, roshomalai, gulap jam, kalo jam, and chom-chom. Several other sweet preparations are also available. Bengali cuisine is rich and varied with the use of many specialized spices and flavours. Fish is the dominant source of protein, cultivated in ponds and fished with nets in the fresh-water rivers of the Ganges delta. More than 40 types of mostly freshwater fish are common, including carp, varieties like rui (rohu), katla, magur (catfish), chingri (prawn or shrimp), as well as shutki (dried sea fish) are popular. Salt water fish (not sea fish though) and Ilish are very popular among Bengalis, can be called an icon of Bengali cuisine.

Having described all these, it will only be fair to admit that the pieces of information on cultural and heritage if one of the most prospective countries of the World are not exhaustive, rather on counts these are indication. But, one of the simplest of definitions of culture speaks 'Culture is what we are', we are of the opinion that the pen-picture drown and depicted above is the culture what Bangladesh inherits and the country very much in.
‘Digital Bangladesh’ is a much-talked issue in the country now. We can briefly define digitalization as the process by which people’s lives get easier and smooth through the use of ICT enabled services. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is regarded as one of the elements of development in the present world.

It is possible to make the country digital by the year 2021 by implementing the objectives of the ICT Policy 2009 (amended in 2012) with the combined efforts of all concerned. Bangladesh Association for Software and Information Services (BASIS) was involved in the formulation of the much-desired ICT policy 2009. The policy is aimed at reaching the benefits of ICT to all section of people. BASIS, the national trade body of software and ICT enabled service industry in Bangladesh, wants the proper implementation of the policy for transforming the country into digital.

In the policy, it was stated that many countries in the world achieved their national progress utilizing the potentials of ICT. With the passage of time, the significance of ICT has increased and now it is impossible to think about future without the ICT. The policy called for taking effective steps for bringing the country towards an advanced stage on ICT by overcoming all the hurdles.

Some recent good initiatives include National Portal Framework (25000 government websites for ministries and departments developed in support of BASIS), Union Information Centers (UIC), separate ministry for ICT, Bangladesh Hi-Tech Park Authority formation and Janata Tower STP (partly functional). Over recent years, Bangladesh has made major strides in laying the groundwork for a diverse and successful outsourcing market.

Bangladeshi freelancer community has further supplemented the ICT exports by close to US$ 40.00 million - with Bangladesh appearing consistently in top freelance work locations on sites like oDesk, eLance and the likes.

Bangladesh offers a vast pool of young, trained and English speaking resources – available at costs almost 40% lower than established destinations like India and Philippines. Government authorities have demonstrated a determination to promote ICT services industry in the country – providing cheaper bandwidth and alternate international cables, setting up Technology parks and providing tax holidays for export oriented industries.

The “Digital Bangladesh” initiative of the government is helping set up infrastructure for enhanced connectivity, ICT based citizen service delivery and ICT based Education system. Internet connectivity has been enhanced vastly over the country. The government has made ICT as a focus area, and
have extended favorable policies for the growth of the sector. Subsidies towards technology imports and tax breaks were provided to the industry.

Bangladesh has a strong domestic demand for its ICT services. It has laid down a solid base through catering local needs over the last few decades. Local market still is major player of the business constituting of 63% BASIS registered companies growing at 20-30% a year. This has honed the skills of ICT professionals who are capable of meeting global demand increasing the ICT enabled services export of the country. Bangladesh has a positive growth since 2008-09 in ICT export leading to $ 32.91 million export in 2012-13 which is US $ 101.36 which is milestone achievement in the country’s history and one of the top 15 export sectors. The total industry size is approximately $250 million.

So, with proper projection and brand building we can achieve extraordinary marks in global outsourcing market.

ICT branding for Bangladesh should have an integrated strategy including concerted efforts instead of desperate source of initiatives. It will help Bangladesh to build brand equity in the global arena for the industry to flourish.

On the other hand, there is still a perception in many overseas markets that Bangladesh remains a risky place to do business and that Bangladeshi companies may struggle with sophisticated offshoring tasks. It is important to recognize and understand the risks that accompany different outsourcing choices and put measures in place to mitigate the threats they pose. If Bangladesh has to leverage its strength to the fullest to become a larger player in the offshoring industry, there are a number of factors that need to be considered.

Many domestic business leaders recognize that Bangladeshi outsourcing industry could better market its strengths to the international community. Negative perception about Bangladesh needs to be countered. Government needs to take a holistic approach towards promoting the IT/ITES industry – including investment climate, taxation, remittances, legal framework and flexible working hours.

One of the major reasons for the IT/ITES vendors having limited growth is the lack of branding and marketing. Most vendors have grown in the existing client contracts, but have shown limited success in signing up new clients.

It is thus difficult for a multinational sourcing manager to find many Bangladeshi vendors offering services readily. The marketing function of most Bangladeshi enterprises is handled by NRBs (Nonresident Bangladeshis).

Limited market presence has overshadowed the advantages that the Bangladeshi vendors have to offer in terms of skills and costs. Bangladesh
also has a gap in middle management knowledge which is perceived to be growing, and is also at the root of limited scale. Bangladesh would have to fill in this management skill gap by keeping management roles with European or North American partners or clients, or bringing in Specialist expertise from overseas – including among the Diaspora. This has implications for cost, however these skills are required to make Bangladesh outsourcing industry a success.

Bangladesh suffers from a negative perception regarding poverty, corruption and being prone to natural disasters. There are also doubts regarding the business climate and infrastructure in Bangladesh. The IT/ITES industry may work towards alleviating these perceptions, however the government needs to step in here. Brand Bangladesh needs to be promoted. There is a case for the government to take a holistic approach to developing the IT/ITES industry.

ICT Infrastructure is the major part for development of this sector. ICT villages, uninterrupted power supply, Hi-Speed Internet bandwidth and Nationwide internet backhaul, Hi-Tech Park functionality and Payment gateway are needed for the sector’s development.

Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS) has been playing an instrumental role in the growth of ICT sector in Bangladesh. It has been facilitating the ICT and ICT-enabled service provider companies to flourish home and abroad since 1997. BASIS has been working relentlessly for the development of this industry through domestic market development, international market development, capacity building, advocacy and social contribution.

BASIS has been promoting the IT Brand “Bangladesh NEXT, Your next IT destination” in the last five years to promote the country’s ICT sector at home and abroad and also to change the negative perceptions about Bangladesh and its ICT industry among foreigners. BASIS hopes that the government also should come forward in this regard.

BASIS has a goal and roadmap to achieve US $ 1 billion by next 5 years from ICT export. BASIS is also working to create 1 million ICT professional and create jobs for them and bring half of the population under internet connectivity. BASIS also projects that 1% of GDP will come from IT & ITES in the country in 5 years.

[Shameem Ahsan, President, BASIS & CEO Akhoni.com, Email: president@basis.org.bd]
1. General Overview of Bangladesh

Bangladesh is bestowed with bounty of nature and immense beauty. The country is also proud to claim as one of the earth's greenest countries. Despite being considered one of the world's most crowded countries, well over 85% of the people live very peacefully in small villages and hamlets. Aside from the 'Daffy' Dhaka and Chittagong (the largest seaport), rural Bangladesh feels relaxed, spacious and friendly. Bangladesh is nestled in the crook of the Bay of Bengal, sharing borders with India and Myanmar, fronting onto the Bay of Bengal. Except for the hill tract regions, the country is largely flat and dominated by the braided strands of the Ganges, Brahmaputra, Jamuna and Karnaphuli rivers. Bangladesh enjoys a unique position - easily accessible from many popular destinations in South Asia. The Bengal region has a multifaceted folk heritage, enriched by its ancient animist, Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslim roots. Weaving, pottery and terracotta sculpture are some of the earliest forms of artistic expression. The best known literature of Bangladesh is the work of the great Bengali poets Rabindranath Tagore and Nazrul Islam. Folk theater is common at the village level and usually takes place during harvest time or at melas (village fairs). The various tribal indigenous cultures have been largely undisturbed by foreign or 'modern' influences and provide a unique opportunity to experience.

2. Present Status of Tourism Industry in Bangladesh

Government of Bangladesh has recognized tourism as an industry and a new National Tourism Policy has been framed in 2010 for the development of domestic and international tourism in Bangladesh. This Policy underlines development of eco-tourism, riverine tourism, religious tourism, youth tourism, community tourism, etc. It also emphasizes the private sector led sustainable tourism development, comprehensive marketing strategy and human resource development in the country.
The Industrial Policy of 2005 and 2009 has included tourism as a thrust sector. The present Government is paying priority and importance to the tourism sector within the context of the national economy as well as to develop country's image abroad, especially in the tourist generating countries of Europe, the USA, Japan, China, and Middle East, countries of Eurasia and other Scandinavian and Oceania countries.

The government has also enacted law – ‘Exclusive Tourist Zone and Tourism Protected Area’ 2010. Under this law, about 35 thousand acres of lands in different areas of the country have already been declared as tourism protected zones. Among the declared zones about ten thousand acres of lands are in Cox’s Bazar, about nine thousand acres are in Kuakata and the rest amounts are in different tourism potential areas of Bangladesh. BPC has also taken an initiative to establish an Exclusive Tourist Zone on 1164.8522 acres of land at Sabrung of Teknaf Upzila in
Cox’s Bazar district under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode. Apart from these, government has developed two tourism master plans on Kuakata and Cox’s Bazar – the two sea beach attractions of the country. Due to the government tourism-friendly policy, private investment in this sector is gradually increasing. Present Government is also paying priority and importance to the tourism sector within the context of the national economy as well as to develop country's image abroad, especially in the tourist generating countries of the world. Government also stresses great importance to develop intra-regional tourism among the SAARC and BIMSTEC member countries.

Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation as a pioneer of tourism development in the country, it is always committed to bring about a positive change in the country through offering standard hospitality services, creating international standard and unique tourism facilities more and more, diversifying tourism product and developing tourism human resources. The organization is also firmly committed to generate employment and reduce poverty margin of the country. To achieve this success, we need co-operation and active support from various departments of both the public and private sectors of the country. In fine, this organization requests all to extend their heartiest cooperation in this long journey of developing Bangladesh as a uniquely single tourist destination of the world.

3. Landmark Tourism Attractions of Bangladesh

Bangladesh possesses tremendous tourism potential, which is yet to be fully exploited. Its tourist products include natural attractions, cultural and historical places, riverine beauty, village and tribal life. Some of its main tourist attractions are:
- Sundarbans - the single largest littoral mangrove forest in the world.
- Cox's Bazar- the country's main holiday destination, it is the world's longest unbroken smooth sandy beach (120 km).
- Kuakata–located at the southern tip of Bangladesh, it is a unique beach of both sunrise and sunset.
- Chittagong - the strategic busiest port and industrial city, the initial jumping-off point for Chittagong Hill Tracts to the east and for Cox's Bazar to the South.
- Kaptai Lake- Country's largest artificial lake with thick tropical semi-evergreen forest dominated by teak trees.
- Rangamati - the lake-town and colourful tribal life.
- Sylhet - the tea capital of Bangladesh with more than 150 terraced tea estates.
- Paharpur - the biggest Buddhist monastery (8th century A.D.) south of the Himalayan.
- Mahasthangarh - the oldest archaeological site (3rd century B.C.).
- Mainamati - Buddhist archaeological site (8th century A.D.).

4. Sustainability

As tourism industry of Bangladesh is yet in the take-off stage, Bangladesh is moving cautiously so that benefit of tourism industry is distributed properly to a wide range of people. It is focusing the sustainable tourism development. The sense of ownership of community people in protecting tourism resources, their active involvement in tourism planning process and project formulations is being monitored. For the sustainable tourism development in the country, the government emphasizes the economic sustainability, environment sustainability and socio-cultural improvement through tourism activities in the country. The positive impact of tourism is
already being taken place at major tourist destinations of Bangladesh like Cox’s Bazar- the world’s longest unbroken sea beach, Sundrabans- the world’s largest mangrove forest, Paharpur Archaeological site- a UNESCO designated heritage site and the single largest Buddhist monastery in the southern of Himalayas and many other tourism sites.

5. Investment

Bangladesh possesses many geo-political advantages for foreign investment. Broader connectivity raises the competitiveness of a potential destination. Bangladesh is connected with all major destinations of the world. Many luxurious and low-cost airlines operate their flight in Bangladesh. Besides Biman, some promising private airlines of the country operate domestic and some international flights. The international airlines
operating in Bangladesh are Dragon Air, Druk Air, Emirates, Gulf Air, Indian Airlines, Jet Airways, Kuwait Airways, Malaysia Airlines, Pakistan International Airlines, Qatar Airways, Saudi Arabian Airlines, Singapore Airlines, Thai Airways, Bangkok Airways, Turkish Airways, Mehin Lanka Airlines etc. Some more are in the pipeline to link Bangladesh with other countries.

Bangladesh is ready to accept the joint venture investment in tourism sector. One company of Singapore working for PPP project with Bangladesh Tourism Corporation, FDI and JV are welcome to Bangladesh with ample opportunity of gaining huge profit. In Bandarban, Rangamati and Cox’s Bazar districts of Bangladesh, there are many fields to invest in tourism sector like Amusement Club, Amusement Parks with recreational facilities. Moreover, in the newly declared Exclusive Tourist Zones (ETZ), establishments of innovative and world class tourism facilities can draw huge profit.

At the present stage, Bangladesh creates an investment climate in tourism sector like the other South Asian Economies. Bangladesh offers lucrative and competitive opportunities for the foreign investment to create multi-faceted tourist facilities around the tourist sites. At present, private investment in this sector is gradually increasing due to the government pro-private sector tourism-friendly policy.

The government has paid much emphasis on private sector led tourism growth in Bangladesh. Various incentives are being mulled to offer. Presently a new concept – PPP (Public Private Partnership) is being implemented to develop tourism industry in the country. The government is committed to extend unflinching cooperation to the private sector for the promotion of tourism industry in Bangladesh. Foreign investors are also most welcome to invest in this sector. In order to encourage private and foreign investment the government is offering various incentives.

6. Regional and Sub-regional and Joint Collaboration

Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation in liaison with Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism is actively working with at least 4-5 regional and sub-regional co-operations for the promotion of tourism. Some of those are – South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC), Asia Co-operation Dialogue (ACD), Bay of Bengal of Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Co-operation (BIMSTEC), South Asia Sub-regional Economic Co-operation (SASEC), Asia Productivity Organization (APO). The objectives of all these co-operations are to pursue common goals that are regional development, employment generation and poverty reduction through co-operation of various issues including tourism. Bangladesh has also entered into agreement with some foreign countries for bilateral
tourism development such as Iran, Pakistan, Kuwait and China. Recently, Bangladesh has signed an agreement with the Yunnan province of China for mutual tourism development. BPC is also making contact with different international airlines for offering package tours of Dhaka city and river cruise to the foreign tourists.

7. Conclusion

Bangladesh is a land of many wonders. With a rich history, diversified culture and impeccable natural beauty, it deserves to be visited again and again. Along with the hospitality of the people, there are all necessary facilities available to make the travel across Bangladesh a memorable one. Bangladesh is always ready to welcome tourists in this land of virgin lush green and ancient civilization. As Bangladesh is a young destination in the world tourism map and its attractions are still less trodden, it possesses a great potential to attract tourists from the world. It is striving hard to develop a planned and controlled tourism industry by maintaining quality and standard of tourism products and services.
Photo Gallery

Victory Day- 2013 Observance at the Chancery Premise

Victory Day-2013 Observance at the Chancery Premise
Victory Day-2013 Celebration at the Chancery Premise
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Observance of the 94\textsuperscript{th} Birth Anniversary of the Father of the Nation and the National Children Day-2014 at the Chancery premise
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His Excellency the High Commissioner Inaugurating the Bangladesh Pavilion at the Australian International Sourcing Fair AISF-2013, Melbourne.

H.E. the High Commissioner and the Commercial Counsellor with the Pavilion Director and some exhibitors at the Australian International Sourcing Fair AISF-2013, Melbourne.
H.E. the High Commissioner and the Commercial Counsellor with some other exhibitors from Bangladesh at the Australian International Sourcing Fair AISF-2013, Melbourne.