
**BANGLADESH ON THE
INTERNATIONAL STAGE**

2015



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Introduction

Over the last seven years, the current Awami League government under the leadership of Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has been highly active on the international stage with diplomacy based on the motto: “Friendship with All, Malice for None”. In 2015, maintaining a highly active international profile, the country has been praised globally for its economic, social and human development successes as well as for effectively tackling terrorism and violent extremism. Apart from playing a key role in the international peacekeeping operations under the United Nations (UN), Bangladesh has been instrumental in bolstering regional cooperation, both in the South Asian as well as greater Asian perspectives.

Diplomacy has been effectively used for safeguarding Bangladesh’s trade, energy and commercial interests too. Proactive diplomacy has led to expanding overseas markets for Bangladeshi products and workers. Bangladesh’s emerging role in the global political scene was also demonstrated by HPM Sheikh Hasina in the last session of the United Nations General Assembly. Very notably, Bangladesh took a leading role among developing nations in addressing the various issues and challenges surrounding climate change. This special publication looks at Bangladesh’s successes on the international stage designed and implemented by the current government under the prudent and able leadership of HPM Sheikh Hasina in 2015.



LAND BOUNDARY AGREEMENT

Due to the efforts of the current government and especially the determined focus of HPM Sheikh Hasina, one of the most perplex and longstanding border issues in the world was brought to a successful resolution in 2015 through the signing and implementation of the 'Land Boundary Agreement' (LBA) between Bangladesh and India. Although the deal was originally signed between Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1974, successive governments in both countries could not tackle the political issues to successfully implement it. Hence, HPM Sheikh Hasina, placed resolution of the LBA as a top priority in her bilateral diplomacy strategy with India since coming to power in 2009.

Following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh between June 6-7, 2015, during which time the 2011 Protocol and Instruments of ratification were exchanged, the path was paved for concluding the process. As a result, residents of 111 Indian enclaves in Bangladesh and 51 Bangladeshi enclaves in India have been exchanged and enclave residents on both sides of the border can now, for the first time, enjoy the benefits of nationality of India or Bangladesh, as the case may be. They can now access civic services, education, health-care and other facilities provided by the two Governments to their respective nationals. It was a watershed moment on the morning of 1 August, 2015 as the 68 years of stateless existence for over 51,000 enclave dwellers ended with hopes of a new beginning.





YEAR OF SHEIKH HASINA

CHAMPION OF **THE EARTH**

In 2015, HPM Sheikh Hasina was adjudged one of the winners of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)'s highest environmental accolade, 'Champion of The Earth' in recognition of her government's far-reaching initiatives to address climate change issues in Bangladesh, which itself is one of those countries which are most vulnerable to adverse impacts of climate change. According to the UNEP, HPM Sheikh Hasina has proven that investing in climate change is conducive to achieving social and economic development. UNEP stated that the HPM has demonstrated leadership and vision in both making climate change an issue of national priority and advocating for an ambitious global response. She was an early adopter and advocate of climate change adaptation policy, and continues to be an example to follow.

The annual Champions of the Earth award is the highest environmental accolade that the United Nations can confer upon outstanding individuals and organizations. Previous laureates of this inclusive award range from leaders of nations to grassroots activists – all visionaries whose leadership and actions drive the world ever closer to its aspirations of environmental sustainability and a life of dignity for all. To date, the Champions of the Earth has recognized 67 laureates in the categories of policy, science, business and civil society.

“Through a number of forward-looking policy initiatives and investments, Bangladesh has placed confronting the challenge of climate change at the core of its development. These initiatives, from climate change adaptation measures to ecosystem preservation legislation, mean that current and future generations of Bangladeshis are better prepared to address climate change risks and reverse the impacts of environmental degradation.

Achim Steiner
UNEP Executive Director

LEADING GLOBAL THINKER

The prestigious Washington-based magazine Foreign Policy has named HPM Sheikh Hasina as one of the world's 100 leading global thinkers. She is among the 13 top global thinkers in the category "decision-makers". HPM Hasina has been named as a leading global thinker for her outstanding contributions to addressing the issue of climate change. German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Russian President Vladimir Putin and President of Mauritius Ameenah Gurib are the other heads of state/government who have been named along with the prime minister of Bangladesh in the same category this year. Every year, the Foreign Policy recognizes the world's preeminent thought leaders in its annual issue – "100 Leading Global Thinkers". The 100 are chosen based on their standout contributions over the past year and their ability to translate ideas into action that change and shape the world. US President Barack Obama, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, Myanmar Leader Aung San Suu Kyi and former US President Bill Clinton are some of the global leaders who made the list in the past.



ITU ICT AWARD

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) elected HPM Sheikh Hasina for the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Sustainable Development Award in 2015. Following varied and successful measures of her government to transform Bangladesh into a technologically advanced "Digital Bangladesh", the ITU selected her for the award in recognition to her contribution towards harnessing the potentials of ICT for sustainable development in Bangladesh. ITU Secretary-General Houlin Zhao formally handed over the award to HPM Sheikh Hasina at UN headquarters in September, 2015. Dedicating the award to the young people of Bangladesh, HPM Sheikh Hasina said her government is promoting ICT access to every citizen so that no-one is left behind. She called upon all for joining hands with each other to remove all barriers to a knowledge-based sustainable future.

BOOK ON SHEIKH HASINA

In 2015, the Russian Academy of Sciences announced that it will publish a book on HPM Sheikh Hasina in different languages. The academy will publish the book as part of its initiative to publish such books on the leaders who are changing the world. The book will be published in several languages including Russian, English, Arabic and Bengali. The Russian Academy has already published a book on former Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohammed.

SUCCESS STORY IN MDGs

2015 was an important year for global development goals as the deadline for the millennium development goals (MDGs) expired at the end of the year and the next round of development goals, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), were adopted by the global community. Throughout the year, the name of Bangladesh came up as one of the biggest success stories of the MDGs. Bangladesh met six out of eight global aspirations under the MDGs and has made significant progress in the respect of the other two.

Bangladesh met several targets of the MDGs like reducing headcount poverty and poverty gap ratio, attaining gender parity at primary and secondary education, reducing under five mortality rate, containing HIV infection, children under five sleeping under insecticide treated bed nets, detection and cure rate of TB and others. The country also saw remarkable progress in reducing the prevalence of underweight children, increasing enrolment at primary schools, lowering the infant mortality rate and maternal mortality ratio, improving immunization coverage and reducing the incidence of communicable diseases.

Bangladesh is also progressing fast as regards hunger-poverty reduction, employment generation, increasing primary school completion and adult literacy rates, creation of decent wage employment for women, increasing presence of skilled health professionals at delivery, increase in correct and comprehensive knowledge on HIV/AIDS, increase in forest coverage, and coverage of Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

➤ ACHIEVED



➤ REMARKABLE PROGRESS



UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Bangladesh in general, and HPM Sheikh Hasina in particular, had a very high profile participation in the 70th session of the UN General Assembly, held in New York in September, 2015. During the UNGA, the HPM highlighted Bangladesh's success stories in the MDGs implementation as well as priority areas of successfully completing the new set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On the sidelines of the summit, the awards of "Champion of the Earth" and "ITU ICT Sustainable Development Award" were received by the Bangladesh Premier formally.



HPM Sheikh Hasina addressed the plenary session of "UN Summit for the Adoption of the Post 2015 Development Agenda" on September 27 where she highlighted Bangladesh's priorities and reiterated her country's commitment towards sustainable development targets and government activities to this end. The Premier also co-chaired an interactive dialogue titled "Fostering Sustainable Economic Growth, Transformation and Promoting Sustainable Consumption and Production" with the Prime Minister of Belgium on September 26.

HPM Sheikh Hasina also co-chaired the High-Level Summit on Peace Operations organized by US President Barack Obama on September 28 with the US President and the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, among others. In her speech in the general debate of the UNGA on September 30, the HPM highlighted issues like global peace and security, democracy, good governance, women empowerment, poverty eradication, right of migrant workers, facing climate change and achieving global development Goals.

The Bangladesh Premier joined the Global Leaders' Meeting on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment at the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping on September 27 and Leaders' Summit on Countering ISIL and Violent Extremism organized by the US President on September 29. She also joined a function on "Moving from MDGs to SDGs: Bangladesh Experience and Expectations" on September 29 as the chief guest, with participation from high-ranking UN officials and leaders of different countries.

On the sidelines of the general assembly, HPM Sheikh Hasina addressed "Girls lead the way" of the World Leaders Forum at Columbia University on September 25 and in the same day she exchanged views with the Business Council for International Understanding (BCIU) of the United States of America, encouraging them to consider investing in Bangladesh given the favourable trade conditions prevailing in the country under the current government.

COUNTER TERRORISM SUCCESSSES

In the US State Department's Country Reports on Terrorism 2014, Bangladesh's efforts to counter terrorism and militancy have once again been vindicated. The report states that Bangladesh continued to make counterterrorism progress, with the current government once more demonstrating a commitment to counter both domestic and transnational terrorist groups. It notes that no major terrorist incidents took place in Bangladesh, and the Sheikh Hasina led Awami League government's counterterrorism efforts have made it more difficult for transnational terrorists to operate in or use Bangladeshi territory. The report lauded Bangladesh's successes in dismantling terror outfits such as Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh, Harkatul Jihad al Islami-Bangladesh, and Ansarullah Bangla Team, and effective steps to fight money laundering and financing of terrorism. It further added that the country is very active in the international and regional arena in countering the threat of terrorism and violent extremism. Bangladesh was lauded for becoming a board member and pilot country for the Global Fund for Community Engagement and Resilience, a public-private global fund to support local, grassroots efforts to counter violent extremism. Bangladesh's use of strategic communication to counter violent extremism, especially among youths, was also specifically highlighted.

Bangladesh's counterterrorism efforts made it harder for transnational terrorists to operate in or establish safe havens in its territory

US State Department Country Reports on Terrorism 2014

LEADING IN PEACEKEEPING



In 2015, Bangladesh remained the top troops contributing country to UN Peacekeeping missions globally, with 9,389 personnel on the ground. A total of 1,19,980 members of Bangladesh Armed Forces have so far participated in 54 peacekeeping missions in 40 different countries. Bangladesh Police has so far committed 1,302 of its personnel to peacekeeping duties. The country is also one of the top contributors of female police officers, with 205 such officers currently deployed globally. Six Bangladesh peacekeepers lost their lives in the line of peacekeeping duties between June 2014 to May 2015, taking the total number of fallen Bangladeshi peacekeepers to 124. This is in addition to the 172 peacekeepers who suffered various degrees of injuries to date. When the UN Under Secretary General of Department of Field Support (DFS) Atul Khare visited Bangladesh in September 2015, he highly lauded Bangladesh's role in UN peacekeeping missions saying the country is now a 'brand name' in peacekeeping.

INTERNATIONAL REPORTS

According to Gallup, with 78 points, Bangladesh is one of the safest countries of the world. With the exception of Sri Lanka, Bangladesh fared better than all of its South Asian neighbours in ensuring perception of security of citizens. Furthermore, as per the Global Peace Index 2015, Bangladesh demonstrated significant gains, moving 14 notches up from previous year and is ranked as the third most peaceful country in South Asia.

Int'l & Regional Cooperation

International Negotiations

Bangladesh played a key role in formulating the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the ensuing Sustainable Development Goals. Bangladesh was also instrumental in the international negotiations leading up to the climate change agreement during COP21 in Paris. A bright role was also played by Bangladesh in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in July 2015 and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 - 2030 adopted at the Third UN World Conference in Sendai, Japan, in March 2015.

Joining the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank

In June 2015, Bangladesh along with 49 other countries from five continents formally signed up to the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Bangladesh is paying US\$132.1 million in five installments to become an AIIB member. Bangladesh was among the first countries offered to join the multilateral lending bank by China and was one of the original signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding signed in this regard in October 2014. According to Jin Liqun, president-designate of the China-led bank, the multilateral bank is already exploring opportunities to fund projects in Bangladesh.

Four Nations Motor Vehicle Agreement

To boost regional connectivity, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) have signed the landmark Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA), ensuring free movement of goods and passengers among the four countries. Signed in June 2015, under the agreement, the contracting parties will allow trucks and trailers with containers, passenger vehicles, hired or personal, to ply in the territory of other contracting parties. The deal is expected to significantly increase connectivity among the countries to boost trade and people-to-people contact. The deal has already been endorsed by the respective Cabinet of each country and trial run of bus in the route was conducted in November, 2015.

Alliance with other vulnerable nations to battle climate change

Bangladesh, along with 19 other countries, that are among those most vulnerable to climate change, came together to foster greater investment in climate resilience. Formed in Lima, Peru, the alliance known as "Vulnerable Twenty" or V20" is committed to act collectively to "foster a significant increase" in public and private finance for climate action. Finance ministers of the V20 countries that have a population of close to 700 million people would meet every two years to act collectively to "foster a significant increase" in public and private finance for climate action.

Bangladesh elected chair of Global Coordination Bureau of LDCs

In October 2015, Bangladesh was unanimously elected the new Chairman of the Global Coordination Bureau of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). This Bureau works with the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, coordinating programmes for the LDCs. Since becoming a member of the LDCs back in 1974, Bangladesh has always remained an active member promoting and protecting the interests of the member countries.

Awards

FINANCIAL INCLUSION

2015 was a milestone year for recognition of Bangladesh's financial inclusion activities. Governor of the central bank, Bangladesh Bank, Dr. Atiur Rahman was awarded the 'Central Bank Governor of the Year 2015 for Asia' for his contribution to the maintenance of macroeconomic stability and a range of financial inclusion activities. London-based financial information provider Emerging Markets announced the award in October, 2015. Bangladesh also won the Child and Youth Finance International (CYFI) Country Award 2015 from Asia and the Pacific region for massive financial inclusion activities, particularly in the area of Bangladesh Bank's mooted school banking, which has embraced nearly one million school students into the formal financial system with significant deposit size. Earlier, Bangladesh Bank's innovative inclusive financing programmes earned national and global accolades like by the Banker (a subsidiary of the Financial Times) and Euromoney magazine (a subsidiary of Euromoney), and Dr. Atiur Rahman being awarded the International Gusi Peace Prize 2014.

ICT SUCCESSES

The ITU ICT in Sustainable Development Award was not the only international award for digital advancement of the country in 2015. Access to Information (a2i) programme of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) won the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) award for the second consecutive year in May, 2015. National Web Portal project of the a2i secured the award under "Access to Information and Knowledge" category. The portal is the largest national web portal in the world connecting 25,000 websites comprising the offices of ministries, departments, directorates, divisions, districts, upazillas and unions etc. and reduces the digital divide between the rural and urban and creating a multiplier effect to ensure the rights of information to the public.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

In May 2015, Bangladesh won the Women in Parliaments (WIP) Global Forum Award for empowerment of women and reducing gender gap. The WIP Global Forum presented this award to Bangladesh in its annual summit in March 2015, based on the World Economic Forum (WEF)'s Global Gender Gap Report. Bangladesh won the award in the 'South and Southeast Asia' category. In the WEF report, Bangladesh was singled out as one of the top countries that reduced gender gaps in politics significantly. The government dedicated the award to more than 200,000 women violated during the 1971 Liberation War as it came just before the celebration of Bangladesh's 45th Independence Day on March 26, 2015.

Awards & Recognition

Bangladesh received the UN FAO 'Achievement Award' 2015, in recognition for the landmark progresses in fighting hunger and undernourishment. Bangladesh reached the MDG target to curb undernourishment by at least 50% or to bring it below 5%. According to FAO, the country is one of a number of bright spots in a global effort to eradicate hunger by 2030. FAO lauded that Bangladesh has cut chronic hunger by more than half since 2000 and is one of three success stories that give the world hopes of eliminating hunger. Additionally, Bangladesh's hydroponics farming system has been recognized by FAO as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS) for innovation, sustainability, and adaptability.



BANGLADESH NOW A LOWER-MID INCOME COUNTRY: WORLD BANK

With Bangladesh's per capita income rising from \$1,190 in 2014 to \$1,314 in 2015, the country for the first time since its independence, is no longer a lower income country but a lower-middle income country.



WORLD BANK FORECASTS 6.7% GDP GROWTH IN 2015-16

The World Bank has forecast that Bangladesh's gross domestic product will grow by 6.7 percent in the current 2015-16 fiscal year riding on increase in infrastructure spending, hike in wages in the public sector and laws strengthening worker rights boosting exports.



BANGLADESH ECONOMY NOW 44TH GLOBALLY IN TERMS OF GDP: WORLD BANK AND IMF

According to World Bank and IMF, Bangladesh has advanced 14 steps from the 58th position to being the 44th largest economy in the world in terms of GDP in the last two years.



BANGLADESH ECONOMY TO GROW BY 6.7% IN 2015-16: ADB

According to a report by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Bangladesh is heading on the right direction to secure 6.7% growth in the 2015-16 fiscal year, breaking an earlier prediction of 6.4% by the same organization.



BANGLADESH TO BE THE 23RD ECONOMY IN THE WORLD BY 2050: PwC

Bangladesh is going to emerge as the world's 23rd largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) by 2050 according to UK-based PricewaterhouseCoopers.



OECD UPGRADES OVERALL COUNTRY RATINGS FOR BANGLADESH ECONOMY

According to the country rating by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Bangladesh outperformed all the South Asian countries except India, and moved up to category 5 in the globe.

BANGLADESH ECONOMY TO REMAIN ROBUSTLY STABLE: TOP CREDIT AGENCIES



Stable outlook for the Bangladesh economy was forecasted by such top credit rating agencies as Standard & Poor and Moody's Investor Service in 2015.

BANGLADESH 7 PLACES UP IN HUNGER REDUCTION COMMITMENT INDEX



According to the latest Hunger and Nutrition Commitment Index, Bangladesh ranked second in South Asia to lead the table for lifting people from the clutches of hunger. The report, published for the third consecutive year, puts Bangladesh in the 14th position among 45 developing countries, up from 20th in 2014.

BANGLADESH IMPROVES RANKING IN GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS INDEX



Bangladesh has moved two notches forward to 107 among 140 countries in the world in the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) 2015-16 prepared by the World Economic Forum.

BANGLADESH LEADING IN SOUTH ASIA FOR CUTTING GENDER DISPARITY



According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index (November 2015), Bangladesh stands 68th among 145 countries around the world, up from 100th in 2007. With the top spot for ensuring primary and secondary female education, Bangladesh fared well than most of its South Asian neighbours.

BANGLADESH THE NEXT GREAT GROWTH MARKET FOR CONSUMER PRODUCTS GLOBALLY: BCG



According to Boston Consulting Group, Bangladesh is the next great growth market for global consumer products. 2 million highly optimistic Bangladeshis join the ranks of middle-class consumers annually valuing foreign brands, and wildly adopting digital technology.

WEALTH OF BANGLADESHIS TREBLED IN 15 YEARS: CREDIT SUISSE



According to Credit Suisse, economic wealth of Bangladeshis increased by threefold in the space of last 15 years, while that of adult citizens has doubled. Adults command total wealth worth \$237 billion in 2015, up from \$78 billion, with per capita wealth increasing from \$1,069 to \$2,201.

BANGLADESH LEADS IN HSBC TRADE CONFIDENCE SURVEY



Bangladesh leads the chart of 25 sample countries in HSBC's Trade Confidence Survey (December 2015), with its score increasing by 23 points to 131. Lower logistics costs and higher profit margins have been attributed to this success.



BANGLADESH A BRIGHT EXAMPLE OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT: MASTERCARD

According to MasterCard's Index of Women's Advancement 2015, Bangladesh has made significant progress in women's employment thanks to better education and wider opportunities since 2009.



ELECTED CHAIR OF GLOBAL FORUM ON MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

For playing an active role in safeguarding the interests of its overseas and migrant workers, Bangladesh was elected as the Chair of Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD).



UNESCO RECOGNIZES INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE INSTITUTE

The International Mother Language Institute (IMLI) in Bangladesh was bestowed Category II status by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

About CRI

The Centre for Research and Information (CRI) is a not-for-profit policy research organization which aims to create a platform for public discussion on important matters of national policy in Bangladesh. Analyzing key challenges facing the nation, CRI explores through people-centered debate the political ideas and the policy reforms that will define progressive politics and policies in a new, Digital Bangladesh. With a focus on youth engagement and democratized debate, CRI aims to bring politics closer to the people. One of the primary functions of the organization is to generate high quality research and data on national development issues and opinions of people, especially the youth, through creative, revolutionary methods.



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