BANGLADESH
ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE
2016

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IN 2016, BANGLADESH continued to play an active role in the international stage. A number of heads of states and high-level dignitaries paid official visits to Bangladesh, enhancing bilateral and multilateral relations, including among others, those by the Chinese President Xi Jinping, World Bank President Jim Yong Kim and the US Secretary of State John Kerry. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina herself paid landmark official visits to such countries as Saudi Arabia, Hungary and Bulgaria. She also played crucial roles in such multilateral forums as the United Nations General Assembly, G7 Outreach Summit, Global Women Leaders’ Forum, ASEM Summit, Water Summit, COP22, BRICS-BIMSTEC Outreach Summit and the Global Fund Replenishment Conference.

Bangladesh’s march forward in the path of development and progress continued to be highlighted in international reports, indices and articles. Terrorism and violent extremism remained a global challenge in 2016, including for Bangladesh. The country continued its zero-tolerance policy towards these menaces and was applauded not only for dismantling terror groups but also setting an international standard in identifying sources of, and combating, financing of terrorism and money laundering. Bangladesh remained one of the top peacekeeping troops contributing country in the world in 2016, helping maintain peace and stability in various conflict-ridden places in the globe.

Migration was one of the issues where Bangladesh played an active advocacy role on the global stage in 2016. In October, the UN approved Bangladesh’s proposal on migration titled ‘Global Compact on Migration’. Bangladesh was the host of the 9th Summit of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) at Dhaka in December which brought together participants from a variety of sectors, including governments, civil society and members of the business community.

Helped by a host of measures and policies undertaken and implemented by the Awami League Government, Bangladesh’s continued progress and development, both economically and socially continued to be highlighted by such reputed organizations as the World Bank, International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Labour Organization (ILO), World Economic Forum (WEF), Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Health Organization (WHO) and various agencies and wings of the United Nations including UNHCR, UNESCAP, UNESCO and UNCTAD. Bangladesh won five international awards specifically for successes in women empowerment and digitizing the country.

In 2016, Bangladesh experienced robust growth in its trade and investment figures. The country signed a very important deal of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and completely revamped its government investment agency to rake in more foreign investment. Investment potential of the country has been highlighted by such organizations as the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO). Development cooperation was also high on the agenda, as Bangladesh forged even stronger partnership with, among others, the World Bank, UN, ADB and India.

Bangladesh secured and/or maintained key international and regional leadership positions. Bangladesh also officially signed the historic Paris Climate Agreement in April and the Bangladesh Parliament passed a bill in February to pave the way for the country to join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) among others.
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Introduction

Over the last eight 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 2016 too, Bangladesh maintained a highly active international profile, with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina attending and actively participating in various international and regional forums and thematic summits and meets. A number of high profile visits to Bangladesh took place by world leaders, while the Bangladesh Prime Minister herself visited several countries to enhance bilateral, regional and international cooperation.

On the development arena, Bangladesh continued to be vocal as regards the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Various international reports and indices portrayed the successes of the country and gave optimistic and positive outlooks for its future. Bangladesh continued to play a robust role for such significant issues as migration, climate change, security, water resources and social justice. Several awards have been won by Bangladesh in 2016 especially for its quest for empowering women and establishing information and communication technology (ICT) as a tool for development.

This special publication looks at Bangladesh’s successes and participation on the international stage in 2016.
Chinese President’s Landmark Visit

At the invitation of Bangladesh President Md. Abdul Hamid, the Chinese President Xi Jinping paid a state visit to Bangladesh on 14-15 October 2016. This historic visit, the first ever by any Chinese President in 30 years, has elevated the traditional friendship between China and Bangladesh into a new era and bears significant historical importance to the bilateral relationship. During the visit, President Xi Jinping held meetings and talks with President Md. Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Speaker of Bangladesh Parliament Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury.

The two sides had in-depth exchanges of views on China-Bangladesh relations and international and regional issues of common interest, and reached broad consensus. As a result of the fruitful visit, the bilateral ties between the two countries have been upgraded to a strategic partnership of cooperation. The two countries also announced that 2017 would be observed as the “year of exchange and friendship” that will see a series of diplomatic, cultural and educational visits.

Among other outcomes during the visit, Bangladesh and China have signed 27 deals and memorandum of understanding (MoUs), totaling $13.6 billion. They span financing infrastructure, energy, information and communication projects, and the two countries have agreed on enhancing counterterrorism partnership as well. Bangladesh also formally joined the China-initiated ‘One Belt One Road Initiative’ during the trip. The foundations of six development projects were also laid by President Jinping and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, including the Karnaphuli River Tunnel and the Chinese Special Economic and Industrial Zone (CSEIZ) in Chittagong.
According to the final evaluation report of the government titled ‘Millennium Development Goals: End-Period Stocktaking and Final Evaluation Report (2000-2015)’ (General Economics Division, November 2016), Bangladesh witnessed remarkable successes in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as out of 33 targets it fully implemented 13, including the one of halving the population living under poverty line. Bangladesh met most of the targets of the goals—universal primary education, gender equality and women empowerment, child mortality maternal health, HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases and environmental sustainability.

Long term planning was a key factor behind the successes Bangladesh achieved as regards the MDGs. The same long term planning has now been employed in the planning of Bangladesh government for attaining the sustainable development goals (SDGs) by 2030. The first such indication came in the Seventh Five Year Plan (2016-2020), the most important five year planning instrument of the government, which has been designed keeping in mind the various targets under the SDGs. Repeatedly, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has affirmed that her government is determined to replicate the MDGs successes in the SDGs.

A specific mechanism has been devised by the a21 project of the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) to track Bangladesh’s progress towards attainment of national development goals, particularly the SDGs, through a web-based information repository. Different ministries of the government have undertaken separate steps to attain 17 targets of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) declared by the United Nations (UN) to build a hunger and poverty-free world. For instance, the Water Resources Ministry is working to attain Goal 6 while Labour and Employment Ministry is leading on the task of achieving Goal 8. To effectively coordinate the tasks and monitor, the Prime Minister has appointed one of the most senior and respected civil servants as ‘Chief Coordinator’ for SDGs.
Hosting GFMD Summit 2016
Bangladesh was the host of the 9th Summit of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) at Dhaka between 8 and 12 December. The summit brought together participants from a variety of sectors, including governments, civil society and members of the business community. Participation came from members of 130 countries, with 600 government members, more than 200 members of the international civil societies and representatives from 30 organizations. The summit was divided into experience sharing, reflections and ideas over the first two days at the Civil Society Days and to the following three days of Government.

One of the most important events during the GFMD was the business-government-civil society dialogue, which completed the migratory circle. The aim of hosting this summit was to ensure that governments, civil society and businesses would act in the true spirit of partnership to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) relating to migration. The GFMD summit ended with an agreement for formulating an instrument for migration governance. The Global Compact on Migration, first proposed by Bangladesh Prime Minister in New York in September, was also discussed heavily and how it should be designed with migration cost being a focal point of discussions as well.

Addressing the summit, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called upon the international community to work together for lifting the migrants from misery and ensuring their dignity. The Premier said migration is no longer about ‘us’ and ‘them’, it is about prosperity and well-being of all peoples and states. So it must be ensured that each migrant moves and works in dignity and safety. That their rights are protected in all situations, regardless of status. She also urged all to be ambitious, pragmatic and balanced in designing a new Global Migration Compact to secure a predictable and responsible international response to migrants and refugees to realize the promises of ‘transformation’ of the Agenda 2030.

Overseas Employment
Bangladesh continued to be one of the top countries in the world with a large number of its workers carrying out employment in foreign countries and sending home remittance. Between 1 January and 6 December 2016, Bangladesh sent over 7,04,078 overseas workers abroad with employments and received $12,651.04 million as remittance that contributed significantly in the socioeconomic advancement of the nation. The Government of Bangladesh believes that the number of Bangladeshi overseas workers is expected to further witness a robust growth in the next year. It should be noted that since HPM Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League Government came to power, and due to a host of pro-overseas employment measures, as many as 41,36,736 workers went for employment to 69 countries till December 6, 2016 and sent $1,04,751.27 million as remittance.
Sheikh Hasina: A Global Leader

International Summits and Meetings

United Nations General Assembly 2016: In her address at the 71th session of United Nations General Assembly, Honourable Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina pushed forward a call for the world leaders to reach a common ground in the fight against the scourges of terrorism and extremism in order to make the world a better place. Pointing out the necessity of ensuring global security as a key aspect to rid the world of poverty and other evils, the Bangladesh Premier urged the leaders to halt the sources of funds, arms and ammunition as well as moral and material support for the militants and terrorists across the borders.

On the sidelines of the UNGA, HPM Sheikh Hasina addressed a High-Level Panel on Water (HLPW) at the UN Headquarters. There, she urged the international community to consider water as an integral part of the new development architecture putting emphasis on ensuring equitable sharing of transboundary water bodies. In reference to her country’s achievement in becoming a champion for ensuring access to safe water, she called for a global effort to ensure integrated management of river basins and promote access to water-intensive technologies to effectively address water-related challenges.

The Bangladesh Premier also addressed the Launching Event of the Global Deal Initiative on Enhanced Social Dialogue for Decent Work and Inclusive Growth on the sidelines of UNGA. With a call to put focus on enhancing shared responsibility of global businesses, HPM Sheikh Hasina called upon the global stakeholders to deliver their commitments on responsible business conduct, fair pricing and access to development finance. According to her, a growing need has risen for devising a robust mechanism to facilitate mutually enriching dialogue among the stakeholders, as the strength of collective enterprise attributes strongly to development.

On the sidelines of the 71st UNGA, HPM Sheikh Hasina came up with a set of ideas to uplift the fortunes of women while attending a high profile conference on Women’s Leadership and Gender Perspective on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism. She expressed her firm belief that there will be no room for violent extremism in those societies that create space for women’s participation and empowerment. She therefore, urged all, to create more spaces for women in all sectors of the society.

HPM Sheikh Hasina also participated in the Leaders’ Summit on Refugees, organized by the outgoing US President Barack Obama. There, she made the point that a united effort is a prerequisite for a sustainable solution to mitigate the plight of migrants. She urged the world lead-
ers to adopt a unique approach to promote orderly, safe, regular and responsible mobility of people through proposing ‘Global Compact on Migration’ and urged them to remain engaged in the refugee issue.

On the sidelines of the 71st UNGA, Bangladesh HPM Sheikh Hasina held a number of bilateral meetings with the heads of government of various countries, including Myanmar and Switzerland. HPM met Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi where discussions took place in solving bilateral issues through dialogue. At another high profile sideline meeting, the Premier sought cooperation from Swiss President Johan Schneider-Amman. Moreover. The HPM also met with the President of the European Council Donald Tusk.

**G7 Outreach Summit:** On 27 May, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina attended the Outreach Meeting of the G7 countries at Nagoya, Japan. The invitation to the outreach meeting of G7, the association of the seven wealthiest nations in the world, was a reflection of Bangladesh’s significant role in various spectrum of socio-economic development among developing countries. The Bangladesh Premier joined the event at the invitation of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, host of the G7 Summit 2016. Sheikh Hasina took part in two discussion sessions of the meeting which were aimed at exploring ways to sustain the well-being of Asia and the global development agenda known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On the sidelines of the outreach meeting, Sheikh Hasina also held bilateral meetings with UK Prime Minister David Cameron, Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena.

Addressing the summit, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called upon the leaders of the wealthiest nations to be more generous to less developed countries. With a less focus on aid dependency, the Premier rather called for a transfer of technology, expanded assistance in resource mobilisation and capacity building focusing on climate change. Given that actions of rich countries have often caused developing countries to suffer, she aptly pointed out that the main threat to world peace now is the growing inequality among nations.

**Global Women Leaders’ Forum:** On 18 May, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressed the opening ceremony of the “Global Women Leaders’ Forum” at Sofia, Bulgaria. There she urged global leaders to join hands to create a safer environment for women and girls alongside empowering them as agents of social transformation. She commented: “We have to work together to create a safer environment for women and girls, equip them with the right skills and education, and empower them as agents of social transformation”.

In her speech, she also highlighted the steps taken in Bangladesh by her government to empower women such as adopting laws which provide for compensations for victims of violence and trafficking, introducing community clinics for reproductive healthcare services to women and having 60% of teaching positions at the primary level reserved for women, among others.

**11th ASEM Summit:** Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina participated in the 11th Summit of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) from 14 July at Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. After attending the inaugural session of the ASEM Summit, HPM Sheikh Hasina held meetings with Swiss President Johan Schneider, Russian Prime Minister Dimitry Medvedev, Japanese Premier Shinzo Abe, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Italian Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni. The Premier also met Myanmar President Htin Kyaw, Indian Vice President Hamid Ansari, European Council President Donald Tusk and European Commission President Jean Claude Junker.

In the inaugural session, addressing leaders from Asia and Europe, she reiterated her unflinching commitment to put all possible measures on ground in wiping out the root of terrorism from her country, saying a national consensus has been developed in people against terrorism. Moreover, the Bangladesh Premier laid importance on smooth connectivity among all countries and communities to secure peace, stability and prosperity.
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with leaders of the G7 countries at the Ise Shima Summit at Nagoya, Japan (27 May, 2016).

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with Asian and European leaders at the 11th ASEM Summit at Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia (15 July, 2016).

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with world leaders at the BRICS-BIMSTEC Leaders’ Outreach Meeting at Goa, India (16 October, 2016).
Budapest Water Summit 2016: In the last week of November, HPM Sheikh Hasina visited Budapest, Hungary on a four-day bilateral visit in conjunction with attending the Budapest Water Summit 2016 at the invitation of Hungarian President Dr Janos Ader. During the visit to Hungary, Sheikh Hasina addressed the opening session of the two-day Budapest Water Summit 2016. Addressing the Water Summit 2016, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina sought comprehensive global efforts for water management, urging world leaders to prioritise the water issues in their policies and actions, laying out a seven-point agenda involving the scarce resource. She called upon all to work together and act now and assured that Bangladesh is committed to playing its role in this regard.

Marrakech COP 22: In the third week of November, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina made a three-day official visit to Marrakech, Morocco for attending two high-level segments of the world climate conference, known as Conference of the Parties (COP22). There, addressing world leaders, the Bangladesh Premier urged them to turn decisions into actions to face the challenges of climate change. She warned that millions of lives will be at risk if Paris deal is not implemented. At the segments, the Premier also pitched for a global fund to achieve the SDG on water and called for addressing the migrant issue for success of SDGs.

BRICS-BIMSTEC Outreach Summit: On 15 October 2016, the Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina went to Goa, India on a two-day official visit to attend the BIMSTEC Leaders’ Retreat and BRICS-BIMSTEC Leaders’ Outreach Summit. During the BIMSTEC Leaders’ Retreat, pointing out her concern over global terrorism and violent extremism, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called upon the BIMSTEC leaders to forge unity to defeat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. HPM Sheikh Hasina also emphasized free trade cooperation among BIMSTEC countries to boost intra-regional trade.

Addressing the BRICS-BIMSTEC Outreach Summit, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina sought closer BRICS and BIMSTEC engagement for sustainable development, peace and stability of the member states of the two groupings. She also urged the BRICS leaders to give special attention to the opportunities in the low-income countries.

On the sidelines of the summit, the Prime Minister also held a bilateral meeting with her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi. The leaders reiterated their commitment to walk together along the “path of development”. The two Prime Ministers also discussed ways of combating militancy and terrorism and Narendra Modi highly appreciated Sheikh Hasina for her determined role against terrorism.

Global Fund Replenishment Conference: From 15 September, HPM Sheikh Hasina visited Montreal, Canada on a four-day official visit, primarily to attend the 5th Global Replenishment Conference at the invitation of her Canadian counterpart Justin Trudeau. During the visit, the Bangladesh Premier attended the opening session of the Replenishment Conference at the Hyatt Regency Montreal. As part of the visit, she also handed over the “Friends of Liberation War Honour” Award to Justin Trudeau for his late father Pierre Trudeau’s outstanding support and contribution during the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971. Along with other heads of state and government, Sheikh Hasina joined a reception hosted by the Canadian Premier. She also attended the official dinner hosted by the then UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and Justin Trudeau.

During her address at the opening session of the 5th Global Fund Replenishment Conference, HPM Sheikh Hasina called upon the international community to work together to prevent three of the world’s most devastating diseases: AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. Pointing out that health security is a crucial aspect of development, Sheikh Hasina said access to health care is critically important for our society. Bangladesh is moving towards elimination of malaria by 2020 and has been maintaining a low prevalence rate in HIV/AIDS for the last two decades, added the Premier.
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressing high level segment of Conference of Parties (COP22) at Marrakech, Morocco (15 November, 2016).

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressing the Global Women Leaders’ Forum at Sofia, Bulgaria (19 May 2016).

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressing the Global Fund Fifth Replenishment Conference at Montreal, Canada (16 September, 2016).
Saudi Arabia: On 3 June, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina went on a five-day official visit to Saudi Arabia at the invitation of the King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. During the visit, the Prime Minister held a bilateral meeting with King Salman at the monarch’s Al Salam Palace in Jeddah. There, they both pledged to work together for world peace and development. Saudi Ministers for Finance, Foreign Affairs, Defence and other senior officials paid courtesy calls on the Prime Minister during the visit. She also had a meeting with Saudi intelligence chief Gen Khalid bin Ali bin Abdullah al-Humaidan. The Premier had with her delegation a 10-member strong business team and together they held talks with leaders of the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) where she called for more Saudi investment in Bangladesh.

Bulgaria: From 18 May, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina made a three-day official visit to Sofia, Bulgaria. While the principal agenda was to attend the Global Women Leaders’ Forum, the Bangladesh Premier also undertook several bilateral and fruitful meetings with the Bulgarian leaders. She held meetings with the Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov and the Bulgarian President Rosen Plevneliev. During the meeting with the two Prime Ministers, Bangladesh and Bulgaria agreed to formulate a roadmap for future economic cooperation to boost trade and investment between the two countries. Subsequent to the meeting, four agreements were signed to enhance cooperation in the fields of economy, trade and diplomacy.

During her meeting with Bulgarian President Rosen Plevneliev, the latter praised Bangladesh’s economic development and said many countries can learn from the South Asian nation. The President also termed the Bangladesh Premier as a 'great leader of the world'. The talks also led to the possibility of enhancing ties in various fields including education and ICT. The President also identified that Bangladeshis can take advantage of the 'blue card' system of Bulgaria to work there.
Hungary: While attending the Water Summit 2016 at Budapest, Hungary, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also held official talks with her Hungarian counterpart Victor Orban and called on President Janos Ader. During her bilateral meeting with her Hungarian counterpart, the two Premiers agreed on three deals for cooperation on agriculture, water management and official level consultations for further improvement of cooperation. They also discussed opening up diplomatic missions in their respective countries.

She paid homage to the national heroes of Hungary at ‘Heroes Square’ at City Park in Budapest. The Bangladesh Premier also attended a high-level meeting on water resources management and a working lunch hosted by President Janos Ader. Sheikh Hasina also inaugurated the Bangladesh-Hungarian Business and Economic Forum.

The Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban said his country is eager to boost up economic and political relation with Bangladesh as the world sees unexploited economic and trade potentials of this ‘dynamically growing country’. Commenting on Sheikh Hasina, the Hungarian Premier commented:

“Sheikh Hasina is one of the few leaders whom we might respect because she is a good example of courage and bravery for us... one of the most courageous lady of the world that very few have done for their respective countries”. ■
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was named in the Fortune Magazine’s 2016 annual list of the World’s Greatest Leaders. The magazine published the list of 50 top leaders in politics, business and activism in March 2016. Sheikh Hasina is No. 10 in the annual ranking. The magazine states: “As the only female leader among the Organization of Islamic Cooperation member states, Hasina has deftly navigated the competing demands of Islamic tradition and women’s rights. She has committed Bangladesh, the nation with the world’s fourth-largest Muslim population, to securing legal protections for women and helping them attain more education, financial freedom, and political power. About 30% of adult women in Bangladesh now have at least a secondary education—and the nation scores better on the World Economic Forum’s Gender Gap Index than any other South Asian country”.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina features regularly on the annual Forbes’ Magazine’s list of “The World’s Most Powerful 100 Women”. In the latest such edition of 2016, Sheikh Hasina was listed as the 36th most powerful woman in the world.
Global Voices on Bangladesh

Relations with Bangladesh one of the best in the system: IOM
Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) William Lacy Swing has said that IOM’s relations with Bangladesh is one of the best they have in the system. He stated that Bangladesh supports them a lot and the country is one of the most active countries regarding migration in international forums. Bangladesh’s hosting of the GFMD Summit 2016 and role in Global Compact were specifically lauded.

Workplaces in Bangladesh now more safe than before: ILO
Director-General of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Guy Ryder has praised the progress made by Bangladesh to improve working conditions and economic growth. He commented that since 2013, Bangladesh has come a long way to make its garment industry safer and to improve working conditions. He added that these initiatives would help the country’s future economic development.

Bangladesh can end extreme poverty by 2030: World Bank
The World Bank said Bangladesh has done an impressive job in reducing poverty over the last decade and has the potential to end extreme poverty by 2030 if it takes firm steps to make growth more inclusive to benefit all Bangladeshis. This was disclosed in the reports titled ‘Bangladesh Development Update’ and ‘Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2016: Taking on Inequality’, published on 3 October.

Bangladesh’s health achievements lauded by WHO
World Health Organization (WHO) Director General Dr Margaret Chan has once again lauded Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s successes in reaching the health services to the doorsteps of grassroots people. At the four-day 9th Global Conference on Health Promotion in Shanghai, she commented: ‘Bangladesh’s present achievements in health sector have set an example for many countries around the world’ (November 2016).

Bangladesh can become an export powerhouse: World Bank
According to a report of the World Bank titled ‘South Asia’s Turn: Policies to Boost Competitiveness and Create the Next Export Powerhouse’, Bangladesh can become an export powerhouse at the level of its East Asian neighbors by improving its business competitiveness and trade regime. It advises the government to support firms to improve productivity and competitiveness by investing more in training, innovation and technology (November 2016).
UNHCR lauds Dhaka for ‘best practices’ on welfare of refugees
The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) lauded the current government’s steps in recent years and expressed satisfaction over the state of refugees in Bangladesh, saying it was among countries having the “best practices”. On 6 June, Stina Ljungdell, UNHCR Representative in Bangladesh, applauded a joint database of the government and UNHCR which became effective from June 2014 and removed discrepancies and also commended the decision to grant citizenship to stranded Biharis.

Bangladesh setting a global standard in ending poverty: World Bank
Qimiao Fan, who is the World Bank country director for Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal, wrote an article on 6 October, where he commented that Bangladesh has set a global standard in ending poverty. Bangladesh has tackled its challenges of poverty in remarkable ways and with meager resources made the most of its strong cultural and intellectual tradition and a national will to build a prosperous nation.
Mobile money driving financial inclusion: InterMedia
According to a study conducted by Washington-based research company InterMedia with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, growth in mobile money in Bangladesh is driving financial inclusion. The study states that financial inclusion expanded 8% year-on-year in 2015, driven by growth in mobile money and a host of inclusion efforts. About 43% of Bangladeshis are now financially included.

Bangladesh 63rd in world for children’s access to justice: CRIN
In February, Bangladesh ranked 63rd among 197 countries in terms of providing court access to children to protect their rights, according to the first ever global ranking by the London-based Child Rights International Network (CRIN). Among Bangladesh’s South Asian neighbours, only India fared better securing the 43rd position. The research took into account whether children can bring lawsuits when their rights are violated, the legal resources available to them, the practical considerations for taking legal action, and whether judges apply international law on children’s rights in their rulings.

Bangladesh ranks 8th in Asia for women in Parliament: DataLEADS
Bangladesh stands eighth among the Asian countries in terms of women’s parliamentary representation with women occupying 20 percent of the seats in the national parliament. According to data compiled by the Asian Development Bank, Nepal leads Asia in women’s political representation in the legislature. In 2015, Bangladesh won the Global Forum WIP Award for women’s political empowerment (November).

Child marriage declines in Bangladesh: IFPRI
According to new research by the Washington-based think tank International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), child marriage in Bangladesh has come down to around 43% from 62.3% in the last two decades. The biggest decline in marriage from 1996-2005 to 2006-2015 happened in the cases of girls under 15, coming down from 15.9% in 1996-2005 to 5.4% in 2005-2015.

Bangladesh made impressive strides in women empowerment: AFPPD
The Asian Forum of Parliament on Population and Development (AFPPD) has praised Bangladesh’s impressive success in the empowerment of women and their great contribution to the country’s socioeconomic development. The appreciation came at the 11th Women Ministers’ and Members of Parliament Conference held in Thailand. (November 2016).

Bangladesh leads South Asia in gender equity: WEF
Bangladesh leads South Asia in gender equity, successful compared to its neighbouring countries in closing the gender gap. The country stands 72 among 144 countries in the world in the Global Gender Gap Index 2016 prepared by World Economic Forum. Compared to the index of the year before, Bangladesh recorded progress in political empowerment gender gap.
World Disasters Report 2016 lauds Bangladesh
The World Disasters Report 2016 has praised Bangladesh as the death toll and the numbers of people affected by natural disasters have constantly decreased over the last few years. According to the study, some 10,882 people were killed and more than 7 million people were affected by natural disasters between 1996 and 2006. Comparatively, deaths came down to 9,906 and 4.5 million people were affected between 2006 and 2015 (November 2016).

PEACE AND OPTIMISM

Bangladesh ranks third for peace in South Asia: IEP
Bangladesh ranked 3rd most peaceful country in South Asia after Bhutan and Nepal, according to the Global Peace Index (GPI) 2016. Bangladesh stood 83rd in overall GPI rankings while Bhutan and Nepal 13th and 78th respectively, revealed the GIP 2016, conducted by the Sydney-based Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP). South Asia's position in the Index remains unchanged (November).

Bangladesh ranks 8th in Happy Planet Index 2016
Bangladesh has been ranked eighth greenest and happiest country among 140 nations. UK-based New Economics Foundation (NEF) released its ‘World Happiness Report’ on 29 July, where it said Bangladesh scored 38.4 points. Four factors-wellbeing, life expectancy, inequality of incomes and ecological footprint are considered. The report said that Bangladesh made ‘sustainable progresses’ in human development in the last 25 years.

Bangladesh tops list of WIN/Gallup’s Hope Index
Bangladeshis are the most optimistic people in the world, according to a global survey released in January 2016. Bangladesh topped the list of 68 countries in the hope index and secured the second place in the economic optimism index, shows the WIN/Gallup International’s annual global End of Year survey. In both categories, the country is ahead of all other South Asian nations. According to the survey, 84 percent of the Bangladeshis polled said they were hopeful when asked whether 2016 would be better, worse or the same as 2015. The score is 27 percentage points higher than the global average.

PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT

Bangladesh could break LDC status by 2024: UNCTAD
According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)'s report titled “The path to graduation and beyond: Making the most of the process”, Bangladesh is doing better in all three criteria for LDC graduation status by 2024 but factors like disparity and governance will be a challenge that the country needs to pay attention to in order to graduate to its next global status of development.

Bangladesh leads Asia-Pacific region in export growth: UNESCAP
Riding on the robust growth of garment exports, Bangladesh outperformed the other Asia-Pacific countries in merchandise shipments between 2010 and 2015, according to the latest report by the UNESCAP. During the period, Bangladesh's exports grew 14 percent while the average export growth of the Asia-Pacific region was 7.5 percent, according to the Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2016.
Bangladesh advances 12 notches in GI Index
Bangladesh has fared better than most of the South Asian Countries in the Global Innovation Index (GII). Released by Cornell University, INSEAD and World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the report strongly highlighted some of the strengths of Bangladesh regarding innovation, which include - industrial design in origin, cluster development, microfinance and gross capital formation.

Bangladesh moves up in WEF's Global Energy Index
Bangladesh has made a significant progress in energy management and has moved seven notches up in the major global energy index, prepared and released by the World Economic Forum (WEF). The Geneva-based WEF in its “Energy Architecture Performance Index (EAPI) 2016” put Bangladesh at 106, up from 112th position of last year. The country also achieved a higher overall score for better energy management towards economic growth and development and environmental sustainability. The EAPI ranks countries on their ability to deliver secure, affordable and sustainable energy.

ICT AND DIGITAL BANGLADESH

Bangladesh made the largest gains in e-government: UN
Bangladesh has been ranked 124 at E-Government in the globe because of its 24 step progress within 2 years. As per UN E-government Survey 2016, conducted by United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Bangladesh has made very good progress in South Asia region and stepped on to the 3rd position at E-Government Development Index (November 2016).

Bangladesh made significant strides towards a digital economy: UN
According to a study by a United Nations organization Better Than Cash Alliances (BTCA), Bangladesh has made a significant stride towards a digital economy as around 69 percent of government payments, or about $45 billion, are now being transacted through digital channels. Thirty-nine percent of these transactions are for government staff salary payments.

Bangladesh moves four positions up in IT Outsourcing Index
Bangladesh has moved four places up in Global Service Location Index (GSLI) released in January 2016, thanks to its significant gains in IT outsourcing, business processing outsourcing and back office jobs. The country secured 22nd position in 2015 from 26th a year before when it debuted on the index, according to AT Kearney, the world’s leading management consulting firm. The GSLI ranks the top 55 countries for outsourcing worldwide on the basis of metrics in three categories: financial attractiveness, people skills and availability, and business environment.

Bangladesh’s digital footprints growing: Huawei Index
In April 2016, Bangladesh was included in a list of top 50 countries for its growth in areas of smartphone uptake, mobile broadband and high-speed internet access in 2016. The country ranks 49th in Huawei’s Global Connectivity Index 2016. The index, which is now in its third year, measures how the 50 countries, which account for 90 percent of the global gross domestic product and 78 percent of the global population, are progressing with digital transformation. The progress is quantified using 40 indicators that cover the supply, demand, experience and potential of five technology enablers: broadband, data centres, cloud, big data and the internet of things (IoT).
BIDA moves to make Bangladesh top destination for global businesses
In November, Bangladesh’s new top investment authority, Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) officially started its operations. It has targeted to raise the country’s investment profile by securing place in the top 100 destinations as per the ‘Ease of Doing Business’ Index. It also wants to take the GDP growth rate to double digit 10%.

Bangladesh’s Net FDI surpasses $2 billion mark
Bangladesh’s net foreign direct investment (FDI) in a financial year has crossed the $2 billion mark for the first time in history. According to Bangladesh Bank, net FDI in the last fiscal year 2015-16 stood at $2.001 billion, up by 9.34% from the previous fiscal. The sectors that attracted foreign investors the most were gas and petroleum, textiles, banking, telecoms, power, food, cement, leather and leather goods. Analysts attributed the rise to mega infrastructure projects like the Padma Bridge by the Bangladesh government as boosting up investor confidence.

Export earnings hit record high in Bangladesh
Exports continue to be a beacon of hope for the economy, raking in $34.24 billion in fiscal year 2015-16 – the highest in the country’s history. The amount, which not only beat the government’s target of $33.5 billion but was an increase of 9.72% over the previous year, fueled by the strong performance of the garment and leather and leather goods sectors.

Bangladesh ratifies WTO’s trade facilitation deal
On 27 October, Bangladesh ratified the trade facilitation agreement (TFA) of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which is likely to expedite the movement, release and clearance of goods, including goods in transit. Bangladesh is the 94th member of the WTO and 12th least-developed country (LDC) to ratify the deal concluded at the WTO’s 2013 Bali Ministerial Conference. Cross-border trade will be facilitated once TFA is implemented and costs will also come down. Corruption and time for transportation will also be reduced.

$50 billion RMG export earnings target by 2021
In July, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) unveiled a roadmap to attain $50 billion export earnings by 2021 from the apparel sector. The roadmap will concentrate on the priority and required activities that should be done to achieve the goal. The roadmap was jointly prepared by the RMIT University of Australia and BGMEA and was unveiled in Melbourne. It is expected that the roadmap would give important directives towards attaining the Vision-2021.
IFC to invest more than $2 billion in the next 3 years
International Finance Corporation, the private sector lending arm of the World Bank Group, is planning to invest over $2 billion over the next three years in Bangladesh. The financing will largely go to the manufacturing sector, infrastructure, power, logistics and financial sectors. In the 2015-16 fiscal year, IFC invested $635 million in Bangladesh (November 2016).

Bangladesh a key market for trade finance and investment: HSBC
Banking giant HSBC has termed Bangladesh as a growth market, as the country with a booming economy is offering huge business opportunities. According to Stuart Tait, head of global trade and receivable finance of the British Bank, the country has made out its name as an important destination for trade finance within Asia Pacific and within the group (8 May, the Daily Star). He added that the climate of corporate Bangladesh is very optimistic as well as open and highly conducive.

Bangladesh an attractive destination for business: JETRO
Bangladesh has continued to be an attractive destination for Japanese companies to do business due to its lower production cost and labour wage compared to those of 19 countries in Asia and Oceania. According to a survey of Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO), published in February, in comparison to Japan, the cost of production in Bangladesh is less than half, (49.5 percent), while it is 81.9 percent in China, 73 percent in Vietnam and 80.6 percent in India. The survey said Bangladesh is found to be the most economical in terms of worker’s wage both in manufacturing and non-manufacturing sectors which are less than one-fourth of China and half of India respectively.

Bangladesh, Sri Lanka agree to sign FTA
Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have agreed to sign a free trade agreement (FTA) in a bid to open up new horizon for businesses. If the FTA is signed, this will be Bangladesh’s first free trade deal with any country. Normally, Bangladesh, as a least-developed country, enjoys duty-free export benefit to many countries, but Sri Lanka, as a developing country, does not get such trade privileges. Signing of this FTA will boost Bangladesh’s exports, while Sri Lanka will be able to buy goods of global standards at lower prices from Bangladesh. (November 2016).
High Profile Visits to Bangladesh

World Bank President Jim Yong Kim came to Dhaka, Bangladesh on a two-visit on 15 October to attend events to mark the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty and also to see firsthand the successes of Bangladesh in reducing poverty. This was the first visit to Bangladesh by an World Bank chief for nearly a decade. During the visit, Kim joined a public event to mark the End Poverty Day to celebrate Bangladesh’s achievements in lifting more than 20 million people out of poverty in less than two decades with its strong economic performance, innovative work with the poor, job creation by the private sector, consistent investment in human development, and effective disaster management.

During this event, he spoke of Bangladesh’s impressive record and hoped lessons of Bangladesh can spread to other countries. “We believe in Bangladesh at the World Bank Group” he commented. He added that Bangladesh recognized and acted on the fact that innovation is extremely important in eradicating poverty.

During his visit, the WB President met Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith, along with other senior government officials, for broad ranging discussions on the country’s development progress and exploring opportunities to deepen the World Bank’s engagement. He also met with civil society representatives and private sector leaders and visited several World Bank-supported projects. He announced that World Bank would increase its assistance to Bangladesh by 50%, and provide additional $1 billion for child health and malnutrition and $2 billion for tackling climate change.
On 29 August, the US Secretary of State John Kerry came to Dhaka, Bangladesh on a day-long visit to strengthen the partnership between the two countries. During the whirlwind visit, he met with Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali and paid his respect to the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by visiting the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at Dhanmondi, Dhaka. There, in the comments book, he wrote:

“What a tragedy to have such brilliant and courageous leadership stolen from the people of Bangladesh in such a moment of violence and cowardice. But today, Bangladesh is growing in the vision of Bangabandhu- and under the strong leadership of his daughter. The United States is proud to be a friend and strong supporter of the fulfillment of his vision. We look forward to growing and working together for peace and prosperity.”

He also delivered a speech for civil society members and youth leaders at the EMK Center in Dhanmondi, Dhaka, met other political leaders and had a meeting at the US Embassy too. During his visit, he tweeted: “Bangladesh has an extraordinary development story”. During the visit, tackling terrorism and violent extremism were key points for discussion in the meetings with the Bangladesh Premier and Foreign Minister. He reiterated that the USA is standing shoulder to shoulder with Bangladesh in this fight.
SAUDI FOREIGN MINISTER’S VISIT

On 9 March, the Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir came to Dhaka on a day-long visit and held important talks with the Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. During the meeting with the Bangladesh Premier, Ahmed Al-Jubeir promised to recruit more Bangladeshi nationals. Both sides stressed on “proper training” before the workers are sent. The Saudi Foreign Minister termed Bangladeshis working in his country as ‘hardworking’ and acknowledged their contribution to the development of the kingdom. The Bangladesh Premier also briefed Al-Jubeir on the investment-friendly policies and environment of Bangladesh and invited more Saudi businesses to invest in Bangladesh. The Saudi Foreign Minister also emphasised deepening engagements in the trade and investment sectors. During the meeting, frequent high-level visits at political, official and private level were stressed to take the bilateral relations to a new height. The two leaders agreed for more engagements and cooperation in many other areas including culture, education, ICT, agriculture and human resource development.

KUWAITI PRIME MINISTER’S VISIT

On 3 May, the Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah came to Bangladesh on a three-day official visit at the invitation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. During the visit, important talks were held between the two Premiers. Bangladesh and Kuwait pledged to work together against the twin dangers presented by terrorism and extreme violence to the Muslim community worldwide. The official talks highlighted investment promotion, energy cooperation, reducing trade gap, boosting manpower export to Kuwait and defence, technical and economical cooperation. The two premiers pointed out their “zero tolerance policy” against terrorism and extreme violence. The two countries also reached a consensus to further expand cooperation in the fields of economy, investment, trade, energy, manpower, military and ICT. Following the meeting, Bangladesh and Kuwait signed four agreements in the fields of investment, military cooperation and road communications.

INDIAN DEFENCE MINISTER’S VISIT

On 30 November, Indian Defence Manohar Parrikar came to Bangladesh on a two-day visit to further deepen security relations between the two countries. This was the first ever visit to Bangladesh by any Indian Defence Minister. During the visit, the Minister met with Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, her defence advisor Retired Major General Tariq Ahmed and President Abdul Hamid. Accompanied by India’s Coast Guard chief and the vice-chiefs of the army, air force and navy, Parrikar met with the chiefs of Bangladesh Army, Air Force and Navy and visited a military academy in Chittagong. During his meeting with the Bangladesh Prime Minister, the Premier reaffirmed that she will not allow the soil of her country to be used for terrorism and violent extremism, especially against its neighbouring countries. The Indian Defence Minister proposed new initiatives to enhance the capacity of the Bangladesh Armed Forces and further strengthen the ties between the two armed forces. The proposals included enhanced training engagements, joint exercises, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief activities, and “blue economy” ventures.
Bangladesh has retained its position as a country free of risk of money laundering and terror financing. The seal of approval for Bangladesh’s efforts to battle money laundering and terror financing came at the 19th annual general meeting of the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering, the regional watchdog, held on August 7 in the USA. The latest APG report showed Bangladesh’s rating is substantial in three areas, moderate in four and low in four. Bangladesh is ahead of Sri Lanka in this ranking. The country was not found non-compliant in any of the indicators.

Bangladesh fares well in Basel Anti-Money Laundering (AML) Index
Bangladesh has fared much better than many South Asian countries in the 2016 anti-money laundering or terrorist financing index published in the first week of August. The Basel Anti-Money Laundering (AML) Index, published by the Switzerland-based Basel Institute on Governance (Basel Institute), ranked Bangladesh 54th in the world with a score of 6.4. In South Asia, only India is in a better position than Bangladesh with a score of 5.69.
With 6,772 troops, police and UNMEMs, Bangladesh continues to be one of the largest contributing countries to UN peacekeeping missions around the world. While working for world peace, 4 Bangladeshi peacekeepers gave their lives in the line of duty. The most important updates from the year in this regard include:

**Bangladesh sends more peacekeepers to war torn South Sudan**
In December 2016, responding to a call from the UN, Bangladesh decided to send an infantry battalion and an engineering company of armed forces to maintain peace in war-torn South Sudan. Both the infantry battalion and engineering company are expected to be deployed shortly under the “United Nations Mission in South Sudan” (UNMISS).

**UN appoints Bangladeshi as force commander of Cyprus peacekeeping mission**
In July, the UN Secretary-General announced the appointment of Major General Mohammad Humayun Kabir of Bangladesh Army as Force Commander of Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). Major General Kabir has had a “distinguished military career, with over 32 years of wide-ranging command and staff experience”. Since 1989, he has held command positions at unit, battalion, brigade and divisional levels in the Bangladesh Army as well as senior staff appointments.

**Ministerial meeting in Paris lauds Bangladesh’s peacekeeping role**
Bangladesh’s role in the UN peacekeeping missions particularly in the French-speaking countries has been lauded at a ministerial meeting in Paris on 27 October. In the meeting, the UN Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Harvey Ladsus, “highly praised” the Bangladeshi peacekeepers deployed in the Francophone missions. French and Canadian foreign ministers also praised Bangladesh’s contribution. Attending the meeting, the Bangladesh Foreign Minister reiterated Dhaka’s commitment “to remain one of the first responders to the UN’s call for troop and police”.

BANGLADESH AND PEACEKEEPING
International Recognition

**HPM’s work on disaster management recognized by IFRC**
In February, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) honoured Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with “special certificate and crest” for her outstanding success in “disaster management”. IFRC Secretary General Elhadj As Sey formally handed over the certificate and the crest to the Premier at a simple ceremony at Dhaka. At the function, the IFRC Secretary General highly appreciated Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her leading role in the global efforts for developing 1 billion “disaster-hit people” of the world as “more tolerant” to disaster by 2025.

**Bengali New Year’s rally gets UNESCO’s recognition (November 2016)**
The traditional procession brought out on Pohela Boishakh, the first day of the Bengali New year, has been recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as an ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity’. The recognition was given at the 11th session of the UNESCO’s Inter-governmental Committee on Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The main event for celebrating the Bengali New Year, known as ‘Mangal Shobhajatra’, is organised every year by the students and teachers of Dhaka University’s Faculty of Fine Arts. According to UNESCO, this rally symbolizes the pride people of Bangladesh have in their folk heritage, as well as their strength and courage to fight against sinister forces, and their vindication of truth and justice. UNESCO added that the procession represents solidarity and a shared value for democracy, uniting people irrespective of caste, creed, religion, gender or age.

**WHO recognizes Bangladesh success in MNT elimination**
Bangladesh has got the prestigious recognition from the World Health Organisation (WHO) for successfully eliminating Maternal and Neonatal Tetanus (MNT). The WHO handed over the certificate to the Bangladesh at the WHO’s South Asia regional office in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 6 September. According to WHO, MNT is among the most common lethal consequences of unclean deliveries and umbilical cord care practices. Mortality rates are extremely high, especially when tetanus develops, but appropriate medical care is not available. MNT deaths, however, can easily be prevented by hygienic delivery and cord care practices, and by immunizing mothers with tetanus vaccine, which is also affordable and very effective.
### Development Cooperation

**ADB pledges $8 billion development assistance for next 5 years**
The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has pledged $8 billion in development loans to Bangladesh over the next five years. The loans, to be disbursed between 2016-2017 and 2020-2021 financial years, are meant for infrastructure, human capital development and climate change alleviation. Bangladesh has received $5 billion in ADB loans between 2011 and 2015. The latest commitment represents a 60 percent increase from the previous one. The announcement was made by ADB Country Director Kazuhiko Higuchi during the launching of ‘Bangladesh Country Partnership Strategy, 2016-2020’ on 2 November, 2016 at Dhaka.

**UN pledges $1.2 billion assistance for next 4 years**
On 3 November, 2016, the United Nations signed an agreement with the government of Bangladesh pledging US$ 1.2 billion for the next four years. The agreement, known as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2017 - 2020, is also strategically planned to carry forward the legacy of the achievements of the MDGs. The UNDAF represents the commitment of the UN system to assist the government of Bangladesh in achieving its national development priorities presented in the 7th Five Year Plan, 2021 Vision, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

**World Bank pledges to increase assistance by 50%**
World Bank President Jim Yong Kim has promised to increase its assistance to Bangladesh in 2017-18 fiscal by 50% as part of a larger global initiative. Additionally, the World Bank would also give an extra $1 billion to Bangladesh for tackling malnutrition and $2 billion over the next three years in new funding to help the country become less vulnerable to climate change. These announcements were by the World Bank President when he visited Bangladesh in the third week of October to participate in a number of events to mark Bangladesh’s success in reducing poverty.

**Deal signed with Indian for further $2 billion LoC**
On 9 March 2016, the government signed a deal to get another $2 billion Indian Line of Credit (LoC) to meet its development financing needs. The agreement for India’s highest-ever credit line extended to any country was signed in Dhaka between Indian EXIM Bank and the Economic Relations Division (ERD) at a function at Dhaka. The government has initially selected 14 development projects in power, railways, road, transportation, ICT, shipping, health and technical education sector to be implemented under the fresh Indian LoC. The second LoC from India came in line with the pledge made by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to Dhaka in September 2015.
International and Regional Leadership

HPM Sheikh Hasina included in high-level panel on water
In April, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was appointed a member of a UN high-level panel on water. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim announced the appointment of 10 Heads of State and Government, as well as two Special Advisers, to the Panel. The panel, which is aimed at mobilising “effective action” to accelerate the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6, was launched at the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2015. The SDG6 focuses on ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

Bangladesh elected President of ISA
On 12 July, Bangladesh was elected President of the Assembly of the 168-member International Seabed Authority (ISA). The election was held at the 22nd annual session of the assembly in Kingston, Jamaica. ISA was established in 1994 pursuant to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas-1982, aimed at administering the mineral resources of the deep seabed beyond areas of national jurisdiction. Rear Admiral (Retd.) Md Khurshed Alam, Secretary (Maritime Affairs Unit) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has taken over as the President of the 22nd Annual Session of the Assembly.

Bangladesh made chairman of Asia-Pacific Information Highway
On 4 October, Bangladesh was elected the Chairman of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway Working Group for the next one year. United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) supported Bangladesh to lead the Information Highway at a high-level forum meeting in Bangkok.
Bangladesh becomes chairman of new Delta Coalition
In September, Bangladesh became the chairman of a new coalition, bringing some low-lying countries together and aimed at preventing floods and rendering urban deltas resilient against climate change. For the next one year, Bangladesh will hold the chairmanship and secretariat of the Delta Coalition, a duty previously discharged by Netherlands. The coalition emphasizes three goals, the focus being on the flood risks facing urban deltas that must be placed on the agenda everywhere. Countries will be working together on achieving national and international goals. The complexity of the delta necessitates Bangladesh's adopting a long-term integrated plan that can adapt to change. The Netherlands is helping Bangladesh to implement the ‘Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100’.

Bangladesh elected Executive Board Member of WFP
In February, Bangladesh was unanimously elected as a member of the executive board of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) for three years (2016-2018). The election to the UN body was held at the UN headquarters in New York where all UN members elected Bangladesh unanimously. Through this election, the global confidence in Bangladesh's agricultural development has been consolidated further. The experts hope that Bangladesh would get more inspiration in further uplift in the agriculture sector through the global recognition.

UN approves Bangladesh’s proposal on migration
In October, the United Nations accepted Bangladesh’s proposal of creating a “Global Compact on Migration” to improve the migration governance and protect them during emergencies. The UN member states decided to finalise and adapt the framework after two years of negotiation. It is possible that the global compact may be a binding agreement for the member states that will have political commitment to protect the migrants and refugees under the UN framework. Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina first proposed the global compact on migration in the UN General Assembly on Large Movements of Refugees and Migrants on September 19.

UNESCAP adopts Bangladesh resolution on oceans economy
On 20 May, heads of government and other high officials from around Asia and the Pacific region unanimously adopted a Bangladesh resolution on oceans economy at a UNESCAP meeting in Bangkok. The resolution titled “Regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific to promote the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development” was adopted by a consensus at the 72nd session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

Bangladesh elected APIS Working Group President
Bangladesh has been elected as the president of Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (APIS) of United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) for next one year. The election was held at the conference of Strengthening Regional Information and Communication Technology Connectivity through the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway (AIPS) in China on August 29-30. China and Philippines were elected as vice-presidents. A total of 16 countries including China, Korea and Vietnam and 49 representatives of noted international organisations, members of ESCAP working and steering group and ESCAP international and regional partners took part the meeting.

Bangladesh MP elected IPU Human Rights Committee President
Chairman of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railway Ministry of Bangladesh ABM Fazle Karim Chowdhury was elected as the President of Human Rights Committee of Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in January. The election was held during the 149th meeting of the IPU at its headquarter in Geneva, Switzerland. Chowdhury, who replaced British Parliamentarian A Clywd, has already served as vice president of the committee in two terms.
Bangladesh MP elected IPU Human Rights Committee President

On 29 August, Bangladesh’s Member of Parliament Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury was elected as the new President of the Human Rights Committee of the Parliamentary Union (IPU) at its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. Chowdhury, a member of the Bangladesh National Parliament, succeeds the British MP Anne Mc Reagan as the new IPU Human Rights Committee President. Mr. Chowdhury is also the President of Bangladesh’s Joint Committee on Human Rights, Law, Peace and Social Welfare.

The election was held during the 149th meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the United Nations-based IPU that was attended by over 400 MPs and parliamentarians from 160 member countries of the IPU. The meeting was presided over by the President of the IPU Assembly, the German MP Peter Schauerte.

Five Parliamentarians, including Chowdhury, ran for the position of the President of the IPU Human Rights Committee. They were, among others, Sen. Maria teaches and Ms. Michaela Puchhammer-Stickl (Austria) for the first time Women’s Committee, Ms. Nicole Gobin (Ireland), Mr. Janne Wiholm (Sweden), and Mr. Anand Sharma (India).

Mr. Chowdhury’s election is the first time an Asian Parliamentarian is elected as the IPU Human Rights Committee President. The Human Rights Committee oversees the IPU’s work on human rights issues, including the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the implementation of international human rights treaties negotiated by the IPU.

Prior to his election, Mr. Chowdhury had already served as Vice President of the Committee in two terms and has a strong background in human rights and international law. He has been a member of Bangladesh’s Joint Committee on Human Rights, Law, Peace and Social Welfare, and has been active in promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms in his home country.

He has been a member of Bangladesh’s Joint Committee on Human Rights, Law, Peace and Social Welfare, and has been active in promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms in his home country. Chowdhury’s leadership is expected to strengthen the human rights agenda of the IPU and bring more attention to the urgent issues of human rights and fundamental freedoms around the world.

International Awards

Global Awards for Women Empowerment
On the sidelines of 71st United Nations General Assembly, HPM Sheikh Hasina was conferred upon two international awards for her far-reaching initiatives in opening up equality of opportunity for women in most of the sectors in Bangladesh. The UN-Women recognized the Prime Minister as a “Planet 50-50 Champion”, while Global Partnership Forum handed over the “Agent of Change Award” to her at a high-level reception at the UN headquarters. Both of the awards stand out as a shining testament to the outstanding role played by the Premier in ensuring women empowerment in Bangladesh.

ASOCIO Digital Government Award
The Information Communication Technology (ICT) Division of Bangladesh Government received the ‘Digital Government Award 2016’ from the Asian-Oceanian Computing Industry Organisation (ASOCIO) in a ceremony at Yangon in Myanmar. The ICT Division this year was nominated for the award for introducing digitisation in governing process. Various initiatives of the government, under the ‘Digital Bangladesh’ vision, were taken into consideration for this award (November).

ITU Recognition of Excellence Award
Bangladesh’s maiden satellite project, Bangabandhu-1, has got the prestigious “Recognition of Excellence” award from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) at the ITU Telecom World 2016 held in Bangkok in November. The ITU in its certificate of award said that it is pleased to recognise Bangabandhu Satellite Launching Project for its excellence in providing and promoting innovative ICT solutions with social impact. The satellite is scheduled to be launched in December 2017.

ICT for Development Award
On 19 September, Sajeeb Wazed, Information and Communication Technology Adviser to the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, was conferred with the ‘ICT for Development’ Award for his far-reaching initiatives in implementing the ‘Digital Bangladesh’ vision as well as his outstanding leadership and commitment towards ICT and competitiveness as a tool for sustainable development. The award has was jointly organized by the World Organization of Governance & Competitiveness, a tri-nation treaty body ‘Plan Trifinio’, an international NGO ‘Global Fashion for Development’ and School of Business of University of New Haven.
Bangladesh signs historic Paris Climate Agreement

In April, Bangladesh signed the historic Paris climate agreement on the opening day of the signatures at the UN headquarters in New York. The historic agreement, reached in Paris after years of negotiations, provides a pathway for countries to reduce emissions so that the global temperature rise is kept below 2 degrees Celsius. Bangladesh, in its statement, highlighted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s personal commitment to combating climate change. Bangladesh also urged all countries to be united in this collective journey, keeping in mind that “one’s non-compliance may threaten the existence of all”.

Bill passed for joining AIIB

In February, the Bangladesh Parliament passed the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank Bill 2016 in a bid to pave the way for Bangladesh to join the AIIB as a founding member. The bill opens the scope for Bangladesh to join AIIB with an approved capital of $100 billion. Bangladesh signed a memorandum of understanding on October 24, 2014 and Articles of Agreement on December 25 in the same year to join the bank. Bangladesh has 6,605 approved shares of the bank and each of the shares is valued at $100,000. China took initiatives to establish AIIB with 57 founder members.

Joining Green Club

In November 2016, Bangladesh formally joined the “Green Club,” a global platform for cooperation among solar-rich countries through signing the Framework Agreement on International Solar Alliance (ISA) in Marrakech, Morocco. ISA is a common platform for cooperation among sun-rich countries lying fully or partially between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn who are seeking to massively ramp up solar energy, thereby helping to bend the global greenhouse emissions curve whilst providing clean and cheap energy. Joining the ISA will widen the opportunities for Bangladesh to collaborate with other member of this Alliance in the areas of solar technology, finance, research, innovation and development as well as capacity building.