



# FOREIGN OFFICE

BRIEFING NOTES

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## Foreign Minister holds bilateral meetings in the sideline of 26th ASEAN Regional Forum in Bangkok



Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen, MP had bilateral meeting with his Thai counterpart Don Pramudwinai in Bangkok

Peninsula, degradation of marine environment, human trafficking, illicit drug trafficking, cybercrimes, etc.

In the sideline, Foreign Minister held bilateral meetings with his counterparts from some ARF countries. On 01 August 2019, he had a bilateral meeting with Thai Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai. Dr. Momen thanked the Thai Government for supporting the initiative of the establishment of Bangabandhu Chair PhD fellowship at Asian Institute of Technology in Thailand. He sought Thai help in early repatriation of Rohingyas in safety and security. Thai Foreign Minister assured, Thailand will continue working to resolve this issue.

Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen, MP led the Bangladesh delegation to the 26th ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) held in Bangkok from 01-03 August 2019. Thailand, as the Chair of ASEAN, hosted the event where Foreign Ministers from ARF countries including USA, UK, Japan, China, India and EU High Representative participated.

Dr. Momen sought support and cooperation from ARF partners and the comprehensive engagement of international community, particularly ASEAN, for creation of a conducive environment in northern Rakhine State for the repatriation and reintegration process of the Rohingyas. He also embarked on key regional issues including denuclearization of Korean

Dr. Momen met with Indian External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar on 02 August 2019. He proposed to involve civilian observers from ASEAN and other countries like India, China, etc. in the northern Rakhine State so that the Rohingyas feel assured of security and safety as there is a trust deficiency between Rohingyas and the Military. He also sought India's support for the early repatriation of Rohingyas. Dr. Jaishankar assured India's support in this regard. On the same day, Dr. Momen had a bilateral meeting with Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Tilak Marapana. At the outset, Bangladesh Foreign Minister expressed deep condolences on the loss of scores of lives in multiple explosions in churches and hotels in







*Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen, MP met with his Indian counterpart Dr. S Jaishankar in Bangkok*

different parts of Sri Lanka on this year's Easter Sunday. He also sought Sri Lanka's support for the early repatriation of Rohingyas. Sri Lankan Foreign Minister expressed willingness to send a trade delegation to Bangladesh to explore the potential areas of trade and investment.

Bangladesh Foreign Minister had a bilateral meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Vietnam Pham Binh Minh in Bangkok on 02 August 2019. He congratulated Vietnam in advance for Vietnam's taking over ASEAN Chairmanship in



*Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen, MP met with his Sri Lankan counterpart Tilak Marapana in Bangkok*



*Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen, MP met with his Vietnamese counterpart Pham Binh Minh in Bangkok*

2020. Both the Ministers followed up the decisions and MoUs signed during the Vietnamese President's visit to Bangladesh in 2018 and agreed to continue to ensure speedy implementation of these instruments.

Later on the day, Foreign Minister Dr. Momen had a bilateral meeting with Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland. He thanked Canadian Government for its vibrant role and support extended to resolve the Rohingya issue and urged Canada to continue putting pressure on Myanmar to get back their nationals in safety and security.

Canadian Foreign Minister stated that Canada was working at the international level for ensuring the repatriation of Rohingyas. She highlighted that getting out of this severe crisis was not only the particular responsibility of Bangladesh rather this was a global responsibility. Dr. Momen expressed Bangladesh Government's keen desire to invite the Prime Minister of Canada to attend a high-level event to be organized in March 2020 in Bangladesh to celebrate the 100th Birth Anniversary of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

## Welfare activities of MOFA

The Welfare Section has issued No Objection Certificate in favour of 11 Bangladesh nationals who intended to visit Libya for working purpose in the month of August. In August 2019, 24 migrants were repatriated to Bangladesh from Libya and Tunisia under the AVRR (Assisted Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration) program of International Organization for Migration (IOM).







## Bangladesh Foreign Minister and Indian External Affairs Minister had bilateral meeting

Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen, MP and Indian External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar met in a bilateral meeting at the State Guest House, Jamuna on 20 August 2019. The Indian Minister was on a 3-day visit to Bangladesh.

Dr. Momen congratulated Dr. Jaishankar on his appointment as the External Affairs Minister of India and welcomed his first visit to Bangladesh in this capacity. The two Ministers reaffirmed that the relationship between India and Bangladesh, forged in the 1971 Liberation War, went far beyond a strategic partnership. It was anchored in history, culture, language and shared values of democracy, secularism, development cooperation and countless other commonalities.

During the meeting, the Ministers discussed the entire gamut of bilateral issues of mutual interest including security and border management, trade and investment, power and energy, river water sharing including Teesta, development partnership, transport connectivity, culture and consular issues. They reviewed ongoing cooperation including the implementation of decisions taken during the last



*Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen, MP welcomes his Indian counterpart Dr. S Jaishankar in Dhaka*

meeting of the Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) in February 2019 in New Delhi and the progress of the projects under the Indian Lines of Credit.

Dr. Jaishankar expressed appreciation for the humanitarian gesture of Bangladesh in supporting a large number of displaced persons from the Rakhine region of Myanmar and assured India's continued support for safe, speedy and sustainable return of the Rohingyas to Myanmar.



*State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md. Shahriar Alam, MP delivers speech on the inaugural ceremony of Bangladesh Consulate General in Toronto*

## State Minister formally inaugurates Bangladesh Consulate General in Toronto

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md. Shahriar Alam, MP inaugurated the Consulate General of Bangladesh in Toronto earlier this year. He unveiled the inaugural plaque at the Bangladesh Consulate General office located in Sheppard Avenue East, Toronto. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario province graced the occasion as the Guest of Honour.





Addressing a small gathering of guests, the State Minister mentioned the relations between Bangladesh and Canada as historic and time tested. He lauded the Ontario Government for declaring the month of March as 'Bangladesh Heritage Month' in Ontario.

State Minister hoped that the new Consulate General

of Bangladesh would play an important role to connect the Bangladesh diaspora especially the new generation to their root and work effectively on the 'people to people' contact.

Bangladesh High Commissioner to Canada Mizanur Rahman also spoke on the occasion.

## **Diplomatic Briefing on Rohingya repatriation held at State Guest House Padma**

A Diplomatic Briefing on Rohingya repatriation was held at the State Guest House Padma on 29 August 2019. Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen, MP briefed the Foreign Diplomats about present status of the repatriation process of forcibly displaced Rohingyas. He informed that Bangladesh concluded three bilateral instruments with Myanmar on repatriation of Rohingyas about two years back. After the abortive effort on 15 November 2018, another repatriation attempt was made on 22 August 2019 with a fresh list of 3,450 Rohingya individuals verified by Myanmar. Bangladesh agreed to facilitate the commencement of repatriation this time in the backdrop of Myanmar's repeated claim that they were prepared to receive the displaced persons. A high-level delegation from Myanmar visited camps in Cox's Bazar from 27-28 July 2019 to convince the displaced people to return.

Myanmar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs hurriedly issued a press release on 22 August 2019 accusing Bangladesh of not being able to send their people due to alleged non-compliance with the bilateral instruments. As per bilateral instruments on repatriation, the responsibility of encouraging the displaced people to opt for voluntary return lies entirely on Myanmar. In fact, the Government of Myanmar needs to take decisive actions with demonstrable political will to reasonably address the core concerns of Rohingyas in line with the spirit and provisions of the bilateral instruments on repatriation and the recommendations of the "Advisory Commission on Rakhine State" in order to create a conducive environment for return of the Rohingyas in northern Rakhine.

The Government of Bangladesh always stands ready to extend all possible cooperation to those who volunteer to return. Sincerity of Bangladesh in facilitating earliest repatriation of Myanmar residents has been unquestionably established through its actions. Thousands of both national and international media are monitoring it on a day-to-day basis. Let Myanmar also allow global media and UN agencies, as Bangladesh did, to monitor and report on Myanmar's readiness in receiving their displaced people, Rohingya.

Myanmar's failure to effectively dismantle the IDP camps in Rakhine and resettle the camp-dwellers to the places of their original residence or places of their choice, as well as taking back the people sheltered at the international boundary (zero line) is a clear manifestation of unwillingness on the part of Myanmar to repatriate and integrate these persecuted people. Needless to mention, such initiatives require no involvement of the Government of Bangladesh.

Accusing Bangladesh of non-cooperation in the repatriation effort by a party who is fully responsible for the protracted crisis is baseless, ill-motivated and totally unacceptable. Bangladesh urges the Government of Myanmar to fully concentrate on the implementation of its obligations and commitments necessary for a durable solution of the problem. The Government of Myanmar should seriously consider a comprehensive engagement of the international community in creating of a conducive environment for their return as well as in monitoring of repatriation and reintegration process in Myanmar.







## Bangladesh's proposal for Bangladesh-Mercosur FTA gets support

Bangladesh Embassy in Brasilia organized a visit of Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi to four Mercosur countries, namely, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay during 17-25 August 2019. His visit to these countries had two clear objectives - to obtain support of the political and business leaderships of these countries for a proposed FTA, and to explore ways to enhance trade and investment relations between Bangladesh and the Mercosur countries.

During the visit, Commerce Minister led the Bangladesh Delegation in 17 meetings which included Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Industry, Agriculture and Livestock, etc. as well as leaders of relevant chambers. In São Paulo, a city widely known as the trade and investment capital of Brazil and also of the region, he spoke at a business seminar organized jointly by the Bangladesh Embassy and the São Paulo Chamber of Commerce. An MOU was signed between the BGMEA and São Paulo Chamber

of Commerce. All four Mercosur countries expressed their support in-principle to conclude a Bangladesh-Mercosur FTA at the soonest possible time. Several other proposals including exchange of concept paper, signing of MOU, signing of protocol and mutual exemption of visas for diplomatic and official passport holders were also agreed upon.

Mercosur is the Southern Common Market including five permanent members - Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela (suspended); and 7 associate members - Bolivia, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru and Surinam. Its total import presently stands at US\$ 166 billion and the total export to Bangladesh hovers around US\$ 2 billion, whereas Bangladesh's export to these countries worth only US\$ 200 million. High tariff is the biggest obstacle to Bangladesh's export. Bangladesh submitted a formal Letter of Intent to Mercosur to sign the Bangladesh-Mercosur FTA in November 2018.

## A roundtable held at Australian National University on partnership between Bangladesh and Australia

Reflecting deeper understanding and partnership between Australia and Bangladesh- a roundtable was organized by the Bangladesh High Commission, Canberra in collaboration with the Australian National University on 20 August 2019 at the ANU College of Asia and the Pacific. The dialogue was attended by members of academia and policy analysts from the Australian National University, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Department of Home Affairs, leading think-tanks of Australia as well as from civil society and business. Dr. Nicholas Farrelly, Associate Dean of the ANU College of Asia and the Pacific moderated the roundtable.



Participants at a roundtable on Bangladesh-Australia partnership held in Canberra





## Bangladesh High Commission, Colombo introduces 'Bangabandhu Memorial Grant'

To observe the National Mourning Day in Colombo, Bangladesh Mission arranged food and medicines for treatment to the terminally-ill cancer patients at the Institute of Palliative Medicine. The High Commissioner handed over the maiden 'Bangabandhu Memorial Grant' to the Institute, to support round-the-year treatment of three Sri Lankan Cancer patients. The Mission served food to 16 cancer patients in Matara district and 23 cancer patients in Palliative Care Centre in Anuradhapura.

With support from the leading Bangladeshi Oncology drug manufacturer - BEACON PHARMA

- the High Commissioner announced a long-term partnership under which Beacon would donate 1 cancer drug for every 2 drug purchased by the Cancer Care Association - Sri Lanka. The High Commission also arranged Dua and full recitation of the Holy Quran by the orphans at the Fathimah Orphanage in Colombo, serving meals to 39 orphans. Earlier, Sri Lankan Cabinet Minister Mano Ganesan recognized the High Commission for awarding the Bangabandhu Memorial Grant at the Association's annual fund-raising event in Colombo.

## Foreign Minister awards Trainee-Officers with Certificates at Foreign Service Academy

Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen, MP distributed certificates among 13 trainee-officers at the closing ceremony of the 24th Specialized Diplomatic Training Course (SDTC), the mandatory departmental training course for entry-level officers, held in the Foreign Service Academy on 04 August 2019. Foreign Secretary Md. Shahidul Haque, a number of resource persons and faculty members, former Principals of the Academy and high officials of the Foreign Ministry were also present. The Principal



Foreign Minister Dr. A K Abdul Momen, MP awarding certificates to the successful Trainee-Officers of 24th SDTC

of the Academy conducted the ceremony. All 13 participants of the course successfully completed all requirements and were awarded certificates.

## Bangladesh Ambassador to Iran and High Commissioner to Seychelles present credentials

Bangladesh Ambassador to Iran A F M Gousal Azam Sarker presented his credentials to the Iranian President Dr. Hassan Rouhani on 18 August 2019 at the latter's office.

The non-resident High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Seychelles Rezina Ahmed presented her credentials to the President of the Republic of Seychelles, at the State House, Victoria on 6 August 2019.







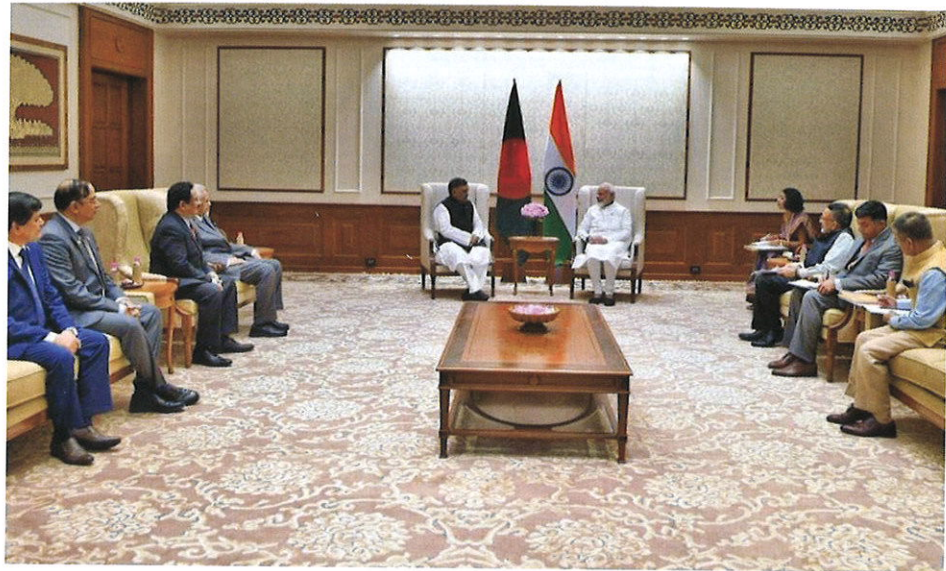
## Home Minister and Railways Minister visit India

A delegation led by Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan, MP visited India from 06-08 August 2019 to hold the 7th meeting of the India-Bangladesh Home Minister Level Talks. During the meeting, anti-terror cooperation, effective border management, security cooperation and few other issues of bilateral interest were discussed in details.

Bangladesh Home Minister also called on Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 08 August 2019. During the meeting, he offered his deep condolences at the death of the former External Affairs Minister of India Sushma Swaraj. He also conveyed the regards and good wishes of Bangladesh Prime Minister to the Indian Premier.

Indian Prime Minister commended the firm position of Bangladesh Prime Minister in countering cross border terrorism. He also committed to remain in close partnership with Bangladesh and other neighbouring countries for the betterment of the entire region.

Railways Minister Md. Nurul Islam Sujon, MP paid an official visit to India from 03-08 August 2019. He was



*Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan, MP met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi*

accompanied by Asaduzzaman Noor, MP and H M Ibrahim, MP.

At a delegation level meeting, Bangladesh Railways Minister sought assistance from India for upgrading the railway lines of Bangladesh through technological facilities and exchange of knowledge. He also visited various facilities and best practices followed by Indian Railways for proper management of different railway services including e-ticket management system, manufacture of carriage, electric traction, container handling, automatic braking system to avoid head on collision and onboard catering system.

## Maldives pledges to resolve the issue of undocumented Bangladeshi workers

At the initiatives of Bangladesh Embassy in Male' the Maldivian side is considering for the legalization of the undocumented Bangladeshi expatriates presently working there. Bangladesh Embassy took up the issue with the Maldivian authority. Following a rigorous procedure, the government of the Maldives has recently reached to a decision to adopt a new programme to regularize undocumented Bangladeshi expatriate workers.





## Home Minister and Finance Minister visit South Korea

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan, MP visited Bangladesh Embassy, Seoul and exchanged views with the expatriate Bangladeshis in South Korea on 18 August 2019. During the event, he listened to the difficulties of the Bangladeshi expatriates related to consular matters. Senior officials of the Home Ministry and the Department of Passport were present. Home Minister also visited the "Bangabandhu Memorial Library" at the Embassy.

Finance Minister AH M Mustafa Kamal, FCA, MP visited Seoul from 19-23 August 2019 to attend the "Global Programming Conference" organized by the Global Climate Fund (GCF). On 20 August 2019, he met the

Chairmen and CEOs of 15 Korean Business houses in Seoul at a luncheon organized by Bangladesh Embassy. The same day, during a meeting with the President of KOICA, he requested for its support in providing technological education in the areas of Robotics, Artificial Intelligence, Block-Chain, Energy Storage, etc. The President of KOICA assured him to examine the possibility and mentioned that they were planning to develop an Early Warning System for Flash Flood in the Eastern part of Bangladesh through a project in 2021. They stressed on the concerted efforts of all the stakeholders to address the adverse effects of climate change.

## Bangladeshi handicrafts and cuisines attract visitors in Seoul Friendship Festival 2019

Bangladeshi traditional handicraft items made of jute, leather, brass and clay, decorated hand-fans, traditional jewelries, tops (latim) and dolls displayed at Bangladesh craft stall and traditional cuisines and fruit drinks at Bangladesh food stall attracted the

attention of the visitors in the recently concluded Seoul Friendship Festival 2019. The audience also lauded the cultural performance of Bangladesh in "Music Café", performed by the local Bangladeshi artists with the assistance of the Embassy.



Visitors at Bangladesh craft stall in Seoul Friendship Festival 2019







## **Art exhibition held in The Hague to pay tribute to Bangabandhu**

Bangladesh Embassy, The Hague, in cooperation with Dhaka-based Buriganga Arts and Crafts, organized an art exhibition titled "Bangabandhu: In Remembrance" at the Embassy premises on 28-30 August 2019 to pay homage to the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. 30 contemporary artworks of eminent Bangladeshi artists including the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman were on display during the exhibition.

## **First Bangladesh-Bhutan Preferential Trade Agreement meeting held in Thimphu**

The first meeting on Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) between the Royal Government of Bhutan and the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh was held in Thimphu on 21-22 August 2019. The main objective of the meeting was to initiate the negotiation on PTA between the two countries following the Bhutanese Prime Minister's

state visit to Bangladesh in April 2019.

The meeting reviewed the draft text of the PTA and discussed on the rules of origin, modality and request/offer and product list including tentative work plan highlighting major programmes aimed towards early finalization of the PTA.

## **Bangladesh Missions abroad observe National Mourning Day on 15 August 2019**

All the Bangladesh Missions abroad observed the National Mourning Day and the 44th anniversary of martyrdom of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with solemnity and reverence. In the morning of 15 August 2019, floral wreath was placed at the portrait of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, National Flag was hoisted at half-mast by all Bangladesh Missions, verses were recited from the Holy Books, special prayer was offered seeking blessings for eternal peace of the souls of the martyrs,

one minute silence was observed in remembrance of Bangabandhu and the martyrs. Messages of the President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and State Minister for Foreign Affairs issued on the occasion were read out. Special discussion, photo exhibition, screening of documentaries, distribution of food among orphans, voluntary blood donation programme, solemn musical tribute, etc were also organized at different Bangladesh Missions abroad to observe the National Mourning Day.

**A gallery of photographs of observing the National Mourning Day from some Bangladesh Missions abroad is presented on next page:**







*Paying Tribute to the Father of the Nation at Bangladesh Assistant High Commission in Agartala*



*Discussion on the life of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Bangladesh Embassy in Ankara*



*Discussion on the life of the Father of the Nation at Bangladesh Embassy in Athens*



*Thai school students are paying tribute to Bangabandhu at Bangladesh Embassy in Bangkok*



*National Flag Hoisting at half-mast by Bangladesh Embassy in Paris*



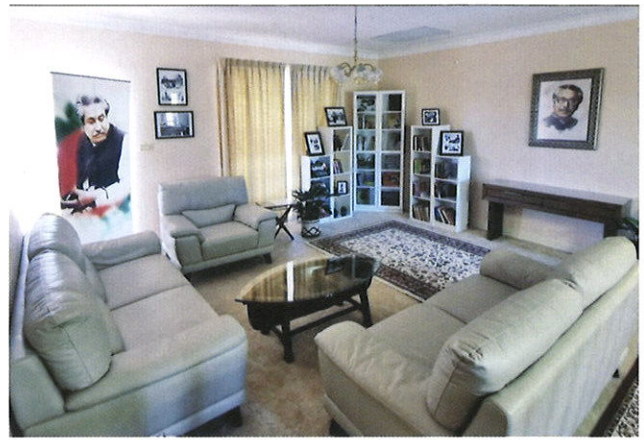
*Paying tribute to the Father of the Nation at Bangladesh Embassy and Permanent Mission in Vienna*







*National Flag Hoisting at half-mast by Bangladesh Embassy in Berlin*



*Inauguration of the Bangabandhu Corner at the Bangladesh High Commission in Canberra*



*Solemn Prayer at Bangladesh Embassy in Hanoi*



*Screening Documentary at Bangladesh Embassy in Kathmandu*



*Lighting Candle at Bangladesh Embassy in Brasilia*



*Solemn Prayer at Bangladesh Consulate General in Dubai*







*Photo Exhibition on Bangabandhu and his family members at Bangladesh High Commission in Islamabad*



*Voluntary Blood Donation at Bangladesh Deputy High Commission in Kolkata*



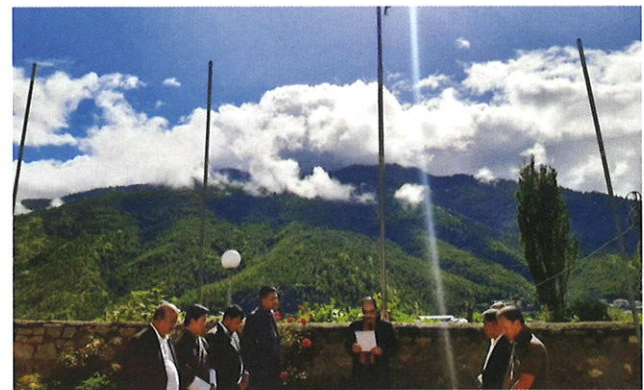
*Paying Tribute to the Father of the Nation at Bangladesh High Commission in London*



*Paying Tribute to the Father of the Nation at Bangladesh Consulate General, Milan*



*Solemn Prayer at Bangladesh Embassy, Rome*



*National Flag Hoisting at half-mast by Bangladesh Embassy, Thimphu*

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