

Inaugural Statement of Hon'ble Foreign Minister

Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen

On

Bangabandhu Lecture Series

Tuesday, 01 December 2020

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Distinguished Keynote Speaker Mr. Abul Maal Abdul Muhith,

Distinguished Discussant Dr. Gowher Rizvi, Advisor to the Prime Minister,

Excellencies,

Colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

At the very outset, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and thanks to so many of you who wished me to get well from this Covid. In this historic month of December, the month of victory, today we started a historic event, the Bangabandhu Lecture Series. Our first speaker is former Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith. In the next month, we propose to have our Nobel Laureate Professor A. K. Sen as our keynote speaker.

Bangabandhu was an institution. He was a visionary leader. He spent his entire life especially to establish rights of people, to end discrimination, disparity and deprivation and to empower people. He was an ardent believer of democracy, rule of law and people's power. He was truly a friend of common people. He was a visionary. His firm conviction on the richness of fertile land of Bangladesh proves to be prophetic.

A food deficit country Bangladesh, is now self-sufficient in food production. Even before the UN could come up with the Law of the Sea in 1982, Bangabandhu could come up with it as early as 1974. No wonder, we need to do research on his life, his legacy and his way of thinking. Therefore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has recently established the "Bangabandhu Center for Diplomatic Strategy and Research" at the Shugonda, the 1st office of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the head of the government of independent and sovereign Bangladesh.

Excellencies,

Bangladesh which was known as the "bottomless basket" is now a vibrant economy, a land of opportunity. Even in post-Covid economy, its GDP growth rate is 5.4 % which is the highest in Asia.

By next February 2021, we hope that Bangladesh will be out of LDC. It would be an achievement but we cannot be complacent. We have to engage ourselves to achieve our targets to reach the Roadmap 2021, 2030 and 2041. By 2041 we would like to achieve "Sonar Bangla", a prosperous and stable country, the dream of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Father of the Nation.

As Bangladesh is progressing well, there are some septs and fear-mongers. They argue that since Bangladesh has undertaken a large number of Mega projects, it may fall into "Debt trap". Our debt ratio is around 14 to 15% much below the threshold of debt trap of 40% of the IMF. They further argue that soon it could be under the Chinese or Indian debt trap. Their fear is not fact-based. Our debt from China is around 6 and half that of India is 1.3 % of GDP. So, their fear has no ground and not based on fact. They further argue that although at this time, Bangladesh economy is thriving but the cost of borrowing will shoot up soon which will drag it into chaos. This fear is also not fact-based. Our cost of borrowing still hovering around 1.3 % only. There is no shooting up yet.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good news is, this year during our Mujib Borsho we have established 68 "Bangabandhu Corners" out of our 78 missions abroad. May I expect of my colleagues to arrange seminars, workshops, display of films and videos in their own domain in collaboration with local gentry, intellectuals, teachers, Diaspora and the like especially in this Mujib Borsho and the following year, the year of our 50th anniversary so that this type of fears could be eliminated. At the same time we would like to tell our stories to the Global leadership. Please coordinate your programs with our newly created Public Diplomacy wing.

Dear colleagues,

We have decided to honor and recognize two outstanding diplomats each year; one a Bangladeshi diplomat, and another a foreign diplomat serving in Bangladesh. We hope to declare the names of the Gold Medal Awardees on the 16th December, on our Victory Day.

Bangabandhu was a great proponent and crusader of peace and he always believed in resolving issues through dialogue and peaceful means. His cardinal principle of Foreign Policy was, "friendship to all, malice to none."

Bangabandhu always said, "Peace is essential for development." Therefore, we proposed to organize the "World Peace Conference" in Bangladesh next year during

our 50th anniversary of independence of Bangladesh. It would be a gathering of peace lovers from all across the globe.

We believe violence, war and terror across nations is largely due to the mindset of intolerance and disrespect towards others. Rohingyas are uprooted from their ancestral homes because of hatred and intolerance. This must stop. We must inculcate a mind set of tolerance, a mindset of respect towards others irrespective of religion, ethnicity, color and background to achieve a world sustainable peace and stability.

Excellencies,

We will be listening to the life and legacy of Bangabandhu today and we look forward to that. With this few comments, I welcome all my friends, excellencies, colleagues to listen to the speaker of the day and those who have questions- they are most welcome.

Thank you very much.

Joi Bangla,
Joi Bangabandhu.