

Positioning Bangladesh: Branding for Business

Inaugural ceremony

Speech by

HE Sheikh Hasina

Prime Minister

Government of the People Republic of Bangladesh

Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel, Dhaka, 21 Agrahayan 1419, 5 December 2012

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

The chair,
Dear colleagues,
Diplomats,
Business leaders,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamu Alaikum and Very Good Morning to you all.

I welcome you all at the inaugural ceremony of the international conference on 'Positioning Bangladesh: Branding for Business.'

December is the month of our victory. I recall with gratitude the 30 lakh martyrs of the liberation war and 2-lakh women who lost their innocence. I pay my deep respect to the memory of the greatest Bangalee of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the four national leaders. I extend my sympathy to the wounded freedom fighters and the family members of the martyred freedom fighters.

The image of a country in the global arena is extremely important for its prosperity, which is strongly correlated with its relationship, trade and other engagements with the rest of the world.

We are pledged bound to turn Bangladesh into a middle income and peaceful country in the global community through implementing our election manifesto Vision 2021. To achieve the goal the role of private sector is very important. The private sector will have to play an important role in accelerating industrialization, and business and commerce.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the sixth five-year plan, the government has set a target to create 6 million jobs. For this, one lakh 20 thousand small and medium industries will have to be set up in the country with investment from home and abroad.

We have taken initiative to attract foreign investment. Emphasis has been laid to improve relations with friendly countries giving priority to economic investment issues.

There are many resources to project Bangladesh's positive image before the world. But I think branding Bangladesh through business and commerce is the most effective one.

Bangladesh's apparel industry has earned global acclamation through public-private initiative. It is the responsibility of all to uphold the goodwill. We have to remain alert so that there is no recurrence of tragic incident like the resent Ashulia factory fire in which we lost a large number of workers. The government will provide all possible cooperation to ensure safety at the workplaces.

We should remember that the goodwill earned through rigorous efforts over a long period can be destroyed within a moment owing to our negligence or fault. There must not be minimum compromise in this regard.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There was a time when Bangladesh was known as a disaster-prone country in the world. With our united efforts, we could overcome the bad reputation. The devastating cyclone in 1991

killed one lakh 38 thousand people whereas the death toll came down to 300 in the cyclone Sidr in 2009. Bangladesh's people have shown their resilience to conquer natural disaster.

Despite world economic meltdown we achieved 6.5 percent GDP growth. I think the private sector has a major share for the success.

We exported goods worth about US\$ 24 billion to 190 countries last year. We want to raise the export target to US\$ 91 billion by the year 2021.

Bangladeshi garments become world famous with the export volume taking the second position in the world market. About 8 million people of our country have been working across the world. They remitted over US\$ 12.84 billion to the country last year.

Bangladesh's pharmaceuticals earned global standard and we are exporting our medicines to 92 countries. Newer opportunities are being created for Bangladesh in many countries, including China. The foreign entrepreneurs are becoming more interested to invest in Bangladesh owing to our favorable environment.

Our government's visionary reform programmes, proper budget management and implementation of incentive package helped maintain our macroeconomic stability. We have already prepared PPP policy and strategy. An effective participation of domestic and foreign investors is essential for proper implementation of PPP.

Bangladesh is now the 5th emerging economy in the world. The World Bank ranked Bangladesh at the 20th position in terms of protecting investors' interest. The position of India, China and Vietnam is behind Bangladesh.

At this moment Bangladesh is one of the most attractive destinations of investment in the world. We have taken effective steps to ensure transparency, accountability and rule of law. The mass media have been enjoying total freedom. The judiciary was given independence. We have established independent National Human Rights Commission, Election Commission, Information Commission and Anti-Corruption Commission.

In 2011, Bangladesh received US\$ 10.13 billion foreign investment. We are going to establish 6 Special Economic Zones to attract foreign investment.

A remarkable development has been achieved in the field of ICT in the country. We have connected 64 districts with web portals. Four thousand 582 Union Information and Service Centers have been established throughout the country. Nearly 100 million people are using mobile phones and 30 million using internet service. Bangladesh has entered into a new era of ICT through introducing 3G mobile telephone.

To improve the communication sector, work on turning Dhaka Chittagong highway into four lanes is progressing fast. Programmes are underway to improve railway communication to reduce pressure on highways.

More than a dozen large bridges have been built during our last 3 and a half years' tenure. Elevated expressways and flyovers are being constructed in Dhaka and Chittagong to reduce traffic congestion. Bangladesh has been connected with Asian highway through 3 routes.

In electricity production, we have achieved a remarkable success. The production of electricity rose to 6365 Megawatt from 3200 Megawatt in 2009.

Bangladesh can be a hub of economic activity of the South Asian region. I think the country's economic activity will get momentum if a multi-lateral connectivity is established with the neighbours.

We have creative business entrepreneurs. We have 160 million people of which 60% is under 40 years of age. These can be valuable assets for our progress. We need proper research for listing our possibilities and their proper projection. I urge the private sector to come forward to supplement the government efforts in this regard.

Branding can play an important role to introduce Bangladesh's communal harmony and democracy-loving people to the world community. Besides, we have to project our thousand years' culture and heritage, and rich nature to the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The nation which earned its independence through bloodshed cannot be lagged behind. We should have had much progress in the last 4 decades. I think the main reason for our backwardness is the absence of uninterrupted democracy and lack of farsightedness or wrong steps by the past governments. We are trying to get out of the obstacles.

Let us join our efforts to build a middle income, progressive, non-communal and peaceful Bangladesh in the comity of nations.

I thank Dhaka Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Business Initiative leading Development, Catalyst and Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Service for arranging this international conference.

With these few words, I declare the international conference on 'Positioning Bangladesh: Branding for Business' open.

Khoda Hafez.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu

May Bangladesh Live Forever.

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