

FOREIGN OFFICE

BRIEFING NOTES

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PRIME MINISTER PAYS OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE NETHERLANDS



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina meets Queen Máxima of the Kingdom of the Netherlands



Prime Minister of the Netherlands Mark Rutte receives Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at his Residence on 4 November 2015

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid an Official Visit to the Netherlands from 3-5 November 2015 at the invitation of Mark Rutte, Prime Minister of the Netherlands. She led an 89 member delegation which includes a 24 member business delegation. Melanie Schultz van Haegen, Minister of Infrastructure and the Environment of the Netherlands received the Prime Minister of Bangladesh and her entourage at the airport. The Prime Minister was accorded red carpet reception with ceremonial static guard at the airport.

During the visit, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina held Official Talks with the Prime Minister of the Netherlands and joined the Official dinner hosted in her honour by the Dutch Prime Minister at his Official Residence. The Prime Minister called on Queen Máxima of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. On the other hand, Lilianne Ploumen, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation and Melanie Schultz van Haegen, Minister for Infrastructure and Environment of the Netherlands separately called on the Prime Minister at her hotel suite. The Prime Minister also attended a programme on presentations of Dutch Delta Plan and Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 organized by the Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment of the Netherlands, a business seminar organized by the Embassy of Bangladesh in The Hague and a community reception organized by the members of Bangladesh Community living in the Netherlands. The Prime Minister also visited a harbour in Rotterdam port area, a fruit and vegetables processing centre and a greenhouse in The Hague.

At the Official Talks, the Prime Ministers of Bangladesh and the Netherlands held discussions on arrays of bilateral and global issues of mutual interest, including trade and investment, private sector development, agriculture, port development, rule of law, and water management. They underlined the immense scope of cooperation between the two countries in the areas of delta management, water resources management and other related areas. They also agreed to work together in the framework of the Delta Coalition. The Prime Minister of Bangladesh requested her counterpart to encourage Dutch investors to invest in the emerging sectors of Bangladesh. The Prime Minister of the Netherlands expressed interest in Bangladesh deep sea ports projects. The two Prime Ministers also discussed about the cooperation between the two countries in various international fora towards international peace and security and agreed to forge closer cooperation in the UN and other international fora on issues of mutual interest.

At the meeting with Queen Máxima of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, who is also UN Secretary General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development, they discussed about the poverty reduction, digitization and inclusive finance strategies in Bangladesh. The Queen informed the Prime Minister that she had found it very encouraging to work in Bangladesh for inclusive finance and expressed her willingness to work out a national strategy for inclusive finance. During this visit to the Royal Palace, King Willem-Alexander of the Kingdom of the Netherlands dropped by to pay his regards to the Prime Minister. The King thanked the Prime Minister for visiting the Netherlands.



Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Lilianne Ploumen calls on the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina during her visit to the Netherlands

During the visit, Bangladesh and the Netherlands signed four bilateral instruments - MOU on Foreign Office Consultations, Letter of Intent on Training Cooperation for Junior Diplomats from Bangladesh, MOU between Saxion University of Applied Sciences and BGMEA University of Fashion & Technology of Bangladesh and MOA between Saxion University of Applied Sciences, School of Creative Technology and BGMEA University of Fashion & Technology. A Joint Statement on the Outcome of the Official Visit of the Prime Minister to the Netherlands was issued on 4 November 2015.

THE QUEEN OF THE NETHERLANDS VISITS BANGLADESH



Foreign Minister A.H. Mahmood Ali, MP receives the Queen Máxima of the Netherlands at Dhaka airport

Queen Máxima of the Kingdom of the Netherlands visited Bangladesh from 16-18 November 2015 in her role as the UN Secretary-General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development, at the invitation of the Bangladesh government. The Dutch Queen arrived in Dhaka on 16 November 2015 and was received by the Foreign Minister and Governor of Bangladesh Bank at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport. During her visit to Bangladesh, the Queen called on the President

and Prime Minister and held meetings with the Finance Minister, Governor of Bangladesh Bank. State Minister for ICT also called on the Dutch Queen. The Dutch Queen held meetings with development partners in Dhaka about their role in inclusive finance and cooperation. She also met with the representatives of microcredit organisations about expanding financial services, attended a seminar on National Financial Inclusion Strategy roundtable and held meetings with the banking sector. She also visited a garment factory in Gazipur to meet entrepreneurs and workers to know about their experiences on loans and other financial services.

During the meeting with the Prime Minister, the Dutch Queen expressed her satisfaction at the different development projects and financial activities, especially digitization scheme of the a2i Programme and mobile banking service of Bangladesh and assured of extending all support from the Netherlands to materialize the "Vision 2021" of the Bangladesh Government.

FOREIGN MINISTER ATTENDS COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING

Foreign Minister A. H. Mahmood Ali, MP led the Bangladesh delegation to the 24th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in Malta from 27-29 November 2015. Theme of this year's CHOGM was "The Commonwealth: Adding Global Value". The opening ceremony of CHOGM was held at the Mediterranean Conference Center in Malta on 27 November 2015. A colorful performance of dance and music in the presence of Queen Elizabeth II as the Head of Commonwealth marked the official beginning of the Summit.

As the Head of Bangladesh delegation as well as Bangladesh Foreign Minister, A.H. Mahmood Ali, MP attended the Pre-CHOGM Meetings of Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Minister, Commonwealth Parallel Fora, CHOGM Executive sessions on Climate Action, Selection of the Commonwealth new Secretary- General, Progress of eradication of Polio etc. and Commonwealth Foreign Ministers Roundtable with Commonwealth's Associated Organizations and Civil Society Organizations. Four parallel sessions, i.e. Peoples Forum, Youth Forum, Women's Forum (the first one) and Business Forum were held during the CHOGM. Commonwealth leaders discussed global political, economic and development issues and issues of common interests like climate change, implementing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), migration, violent extremism and radicalization, human rights etc. At a plenary session of Commonwealth Business Forum on "Connecting Asia: Accelerating Regional Integration and Development", Foreign Minister delivered a keynote speech on behalf of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on "Regional Connectivity in South Asia." A Bangladesh specific roundtable was also held at the sidelines of the Commonwealth Business Forum with a considerable participation of business people from across Commonwealth countries. The Foreign Minister had bilateral meetings with Canadian Prime Minister and Prime Minister of Antigua Barbuda; his counterparts from Britain, Canada and Botswana; Representative of Australian Foreign Minister and former Foreign Minister of Australia; and British State Minister for Trade and Investment at the sidelines of CHOGM 2015. Issues of mutual interests were discussed during the meetings. During the CHOGM, Dominican citizen Baroness Patricia Janet Scotland QC has been selected as the new Secretary General of Commonwealth who would assume the charge in April 2016 for the next four years.

Bangladesh's views and position on the relevant issues were

reflected in the outcome documents of CHOGM i.e. CHOGM 2015 Communiqué, Leaders’ Statements and Commonwealth Leaders’ Statement on Climate Action. Participation in the CHOGM enhanced the image of Bangladesh in the international arena.

FOREIGN MINISTER ATTENDS 12TH ASEM FOREIGN MINISTERS’ MEETING IN LUXEMBOURG



Foreign Minister A. H. Mahmood Ali, MP attended the 12th ASEM Foreign Ministers’ Meeting (FMM) held in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg from 5-6 November 2015. The meeting was attended by Foreign Ministers/Deputy Ministers of 51 member states, the ASEAN Secretary General and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The event was hosted by the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg, Jean Asselborn, and chaired by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini. Foreign Minister led the Bangladesh delegation. The 12th ASEM FMM was preceded by the Senior Officials’ Meeting from 2-4 Nov 2015.

Foreign Minister, A H Mahmood Ali, MP, in his deliberation in the Plenary Session 1 of the Meeting stressed on the linkages between climate change, sustainable development and disaster risk management. He said that addressing climate change is about ensuring enjoyment of human rights, justice and fundamental freedoms for people, especially at the bottom. He emphasised that discussions on climate change must be placed within the broader narrative of peace, stability, prosperity and addressing inequalities across societies. At the retreat of the Foreign Ministers, the Foreign Minister recounted that within Bangladesh and South Asia - resolute determination of the political leadership is the key to tackle violent extremism and sought support and understanding of the friendly countries. He said, being a victim of terrorism, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina affirms zero tolerance to any form of terrorism, including financing of terrorism, radicalization and violent extremism, nationally and internationally. Speaking on migration and refugee issue, he urged for concerted regional and international responses in addressing the challenges. There is also need to address root causes of both regular and irregular migration, he added. He emphasized the need to take resolute steps in countering



Foreign Minister A. H. Mahmood Ali,MP, with EU HR Federica Mogherini

smuggling and trafficking in person especially with a gender perspective as women victims suffer disproportionately. At the sidelines of the 12th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), Foreign Minister A H

Mahmood Ali, MP held discussions with the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini, German Foreign Minister Frank Walter Steinmeier, Belgian Foreign Minister (Deputy Prime Minister) Didier Reynders, Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn, Dutch Foreign Minister Bert Koenders, Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallström. The Ministers discussed various issues of mutual interests. Foreign Minister also extended invitation to his Belgian and Luxembourg counterparts to visit Bangladesh which they welcomed. The Ministers appreciated sustained progress in Bangladesh, particularly in terms of disaster management, climate change adaptation and resilience, basic health care. The Luxembourg Ministerial meeting offered an important platform for Foreign Minister for building up on bilateral contacts with a number of his counterparts from Europe. This also provided a forum for sharing Bangladesh’s position on a number of issues of global interest including climate change and counter terrorism as well as refugee and migration issues.

HEADQUARTERS AGREEMENT SIGNED BETWEEN GOVERNMENT OF BANGLADESH AND BIMSTEC SECRETARIAT



Foreign Minister A. H. Mahmood Ali, MP and Secretary General (BIMSTEC) Ambassador Sumith Nakandala exchange the Headquarters Agreement

The Signing Ceremony for the Headquarters Agreement between the Government of Bangladesh and the BIMSTEC Secretariat was held on 1 November 2015 at Ministry Of Foreign Affairs in Dhaka. The signing ceremony was attended by Foreign Minister A. H. Mahmood Ali, MP, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md. Shahriar Alam, MP, Foreign Secretary Md. Shahidul Haque, the BIMSTEC Secretary General Ambassador Sumith Nakandala and other officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Foreign Minister signed the agreement on behalf of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh. It was expected that by signing the Headquarters Agreement, the regional cooperation under the aegis of BIMSTEC will grow stronger.

UNDP ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR AND DIRECTOR MEETS STATE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS



UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director Haoling Xu meets State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md. Shahriar Alam, MP

UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director Haoling Xu met with the State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md. Shahriar Alam, MP at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre on 16 November 2015. During the meeting, Haoling Xu expressed his interest to know Bangladesh's plan to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by UNGA. Md. Shahriar Alam informed him that the goals would be incorporated into the mainstream development initiatives of Bangladesh and accordingly, each goal would be reflected in the recently adopted 7 Year Development Plan of the Government. They also discussed future cooperation between Bangladesh and UNDP in achieving SDGs and other related fields.

The State Minister appreciated the contribution of UNDP in Bangladesh's effort in achieving its economic independence since 1972 and hoped that the cooperation would further be strengthened in future. The UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative Robert Watkins and UNDP Country Director Pauline Tamesis were also present in the meeting.

HEADQUARTERS AGREEMENT SIGNED BETWEEN BANGLADESH AND THE SOUTH ASIAN REGIONAL STANDARDS ORGANIZATION (SARSO)



Foreign Secretary Md. Shahidul Haque and Director General, SARSO, Dr. Syed Humayun Kabir exchange the Headquarters Agreement

Md. Shahidul Haque, Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh and Dr. Syed Humayun Kabir, Director General, South Asian Regional Standards Organization (SARSO) signed the Headquarters Agreement on behalf of their

respective Government/Organization. Foreign Minister A. H. Mahmood Ali, MP, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md. Shahriar Alam, MP along with senior officials from different Ministries and Organizations also attended the event. The Headquarters Agreement indicates the diplomatic immunities and privileges to be provided to the eligible personnel of the Organization in the host country. It is expected that on signing the agreement, both the secretariats will function more smoothly and effectively in the coming days. The South Asian Regional Standards Organization (SARSO), which has been operational since 03 April 2014, is a specialized body established for the harmonization of standards of products and to facilitate and enhance intra-SAARC trade volume between the SAARC member states.

BANGLADESH AND PORTUGAL SIGNS TWO MOUs/ PROTOCOLS



Diplomatic Institute of Portugal (DIP) on Diplomatic Training and Exchange of Information and Documentation on 24 November 2015 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Lisbon. Ambassador of Bangladesh in Portugal Imtiaz Ahmed and Foreign Secretary of

Bangladesh and Portugal signed two instruments, namely, i. MOU on regular Foreign Office Consultation and ii. Protocol of Cooperation between Bangladesh Foreign Service Academy (FSA) and

Portugal Ambassador Ana Martinho signed the two instruments on behalf of their respective governments.

BANGLADESH EMBASSY SIGNS MOU WITH KOREAN MINISTRY

The Embassy of Bangladesh in Seoul has signed a tripartite document titled "Memorandum of Understanding on Trilateral Cooperation for the Free Semester Program" on 12 November 2015 with the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training (KRIVET) in a ceremony held at Grand Hyatt Hotel, Seoul. The agreement was signed by Hwang, Woo Yea, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education of the Republic of Korea and Lee, Yong Soon, President, KRIVET from Korean side and by Ambassador Zulfikur Rahman from Bangladesh Embassy. According to the agreement, the Embassy of Bangladesh in Seoul will operate global career experience programmes to provide cultural experiences of Bangladesh to the junior high and high school students of Korea. The programme is expected to be an effective channel for Bangladesh Embassy to disseminate Bangladesh culture and to create greater understanding about Bangladesh among Korean students. Few other Embassies in Seoul and some global agencies also signed up for the programme.

DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN BANGLADESH AND INDIA HELD IN NEW DELHI

Shipping Secretary level talks between Bangladesh and India were held in New Delhi on 16th November 2015. The Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) for operationalization of coastal shipping were signed in the meeting in line with the agreement signed during Indian Prime Minister's visit to Bangladesh in June 2015. During the meeting, discussions also took place on various crucial issues of bilateral interests including use of Mongla-Chittagong ports, payment of transit fee, dredging of rivers and development of Paira port etc. Outcomes of the talks are expected to enhance movement of vessels and cargo between Bangladesh and India.

The 10th Meeting of Joint Working Group (JWG) on Cooperation in Power Sector was held on 27th November 2015 in New Delhi. During the meeting, both sides conveyed their satisfaction on progress being made in 1,320 MW Maitree Super Thermal Power project at Rampal, Bagerhat. Besides, Bangladesh side tabled the proposal for import of electricity from Nepal and Bhutan to Bangladesh.

BANGLADESH PRESIDES OVER STATE PARTIES CONFERENCE IN GENEVA

Bangladesh Ambassador and Permanent Representative to United Nations and other International Organizations Ambassador M Shameem Ahsan in Geneva presided over the Ninth Conference of the High Contracting Parties (State Parties) of the Protocol Five of the "Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which may be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW)". Bangladesh is a state party to the CCW as well as its Protocol Five, which deals with Explosive Remnants of War. Ambassador M Shameem Ahsan was unanimously designated as the President of the Ninth Conference of the States Parties of CCW Protocol Five in the Eighth Conference held in Geneva in November 2014. His election as the President was, on one hand, the manifestation of the confidence on his long diplomatic experience, knowledge and leadership by the States Parties, the UN Secretariat and other stakeholders of the Protocol, and the recognition of Bangladesh's continued commitment and proactive engagement in the global proceedings on disarmament and humanitarian law related

discourse. During the Conference in Geneva from 9-10 November 2015, intense discussion took place among the State Parties and other stakeholders on pertinent issues related to the successful implementation of the Protocol including Cooperation and Assistance, Victim Assistance, National Reporting, Clearance & Recording, retaining and transmission of information and Generic Preventive Measures. An outcome document was adopted at the end of the Conference, with some recommendations on each thematic area. Mentionable that Bangladesh was specially praised for submitting its first National Report on Protocol Five of the CCW. Also throughout the Conference, delegations of many countries and organizations deeply appreciated Ambassador M Shameem Ahsan's successful steering of this important Conference.

BANGLADESH ELECTED TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS (OPCW) FOR 2016-2018

Bangladesh has been elected as a member of the Executive Council of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for the term 2016 – 2018. Bangladesh last served in the Council for the period from 2002-2004. Bangladesh was unanimously elected by States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention on 2 December 2015 during the 20th Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention held in The Hague, Netherlands on 30 November – 4 December 2015. Bangladesh was among the four State Parties elected to serve in the Council, representing the Asian Group for the term 2016 – 2018. Bangladesh Ambassador to the Netherlands and Permanent Representative to OPCW, Sheikh Mohammed Belal was also elected unanimously as Chair of the Committee of the Whole and Chair of the Credential Committee. Ambassador Belal, in his statement to the 20th Session of the Conference of States Parties, highlighted Bangladesh's credential as the world's leading troop contributor to the UN and urged all to continue their drive for world peace. Ambassador Belal also informed the proceedings about Bangladesh's preparation for Asian Chemical Congress early next year and Bangladesh's resolve to work out a "Code of Conduct for Chemists" with the help from OPCW's member States. Bangladesh's election to the OPCW Executive Council is seen as recognition by the international community of the country's contribution to the world peace as well as its leadership in the multilateral fora. The election also signifies international recognition of Bangladesh's efforts to attain global disarmament and stem proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

WATER RESOURCES MINISTER VISITS NEW DELHI

Water Resources Minister Anisul Islam Mahmud visited New Delhi on 19 November 2015 to attend the Water Innovation Summit organized by Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) and the Water Institute of India. Addressing the event as a special guest, the Bangladesh Water Resources Minister called for joint efforts to harness water resources in the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna basin in order to ensure greater well being of the people of the region. He also called for early signing of the Teesta water sharing agreement. Later, the Minister met his Indian counterpart Uma Bharati and discussed matters of mutual interest. On interlinking of rivers in India, the Indian Minister assured no projects would be taken up which would adversely affect Bangladesh. She also accepted invitation to attend the next JRC meeting to be held in Bangladesh at a mutually convenient time.

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BANGLADESH TO UN PRESENTS CREDENTIALS

Permanent Representative and Ambassador of Bangladesh to the



UN Masud Bin Momen presented his credentials to the Secretary General of the UN Ban Ki-moon at the UN Headquarters. Masud Bin Momen becomes the 14th Permanent

Representative (PR) of Bangladesh to the UN since 1974 when Bangladesh became the member of the apex body of the international community under the leadership of the Father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. While presenting his credentials, the PR conveyed the greetings of the President and Prime Minister of Bangladesh to the Secretary General. Ban Ki-moon lauded the development of Bangladesh in different sectors under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in recent years. He particularly appreciated Bangladesh's achievement in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and expressed his optimism that Bangladesh would do even better in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He fondly remembered his ties with Bangladesh starting from his engagement in establishing diplomatic relationship between his country and Bangladesh and later his activities in Bangladesh as the Secretary General of the UN. The Secretary General highly praised Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's leadership in addressing the climate change and disaster risk reduction issues at the international level. He also hoped that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina would participate in the Migration Summit that would be hosted by the UN just before the 71st General Assembly in 2016. Ban Ki-moon hoped that as the Chair of the Global Forum on Migration and Development in 2016, Bangladesh would take lead in the migration and development. The PR appreciated Secretary General's initiatives for hosting the World Humanitarian Summit to be held next year. He assured the Secretary General of the continuation of Bangladesh's active role in the fields of sustainable development particularly as the current LDC Chair, peace keeping and peace building. Mrs. Ban Ki-moon was present during the credential presenting ceremony. The PR appreciated Mrs. Ban Ki-moon's interest for addressing autism and invited her to attend the World Autism Awareness Day observation event to be hosted by the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh next year. During the ceremony, the PR's wife Fahmida Jabeen, Deputy PR Sadia Faizunnesa and Assistant Secretary General of the UN Miroslav Jenca were also present.

BANGLADESH HIGH COMMISSIONER TO MALTA PRESENTS CREDENTIALS



On 05 November 2015, Bangladesh non-resident High Commissioner to the Republic of Malta Md. Jashim Uddin (Bangladesh Ambassador to Greece) has presented his Credentials to the President of the Republic

of Malta, Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca at San Anton Palace in the Maltese capital Valletta. While presenting his credentials, the Bangladesh High Commissioner conveyed the greetings of the

President and the Prime Minister of Bangladesh to the President of Malta.

FOREIGN SECRETARY HOSTS FAREWELL LUNCH IN HONOR OF THE DEPARTING HIGH COMMISSIONER OF MALAYSIA

On 8 November 2015, Foreign Secretary hosted a farewell lunch in honor of the departing High Commissioner of Malaysia to Bangladesh Norlin Binti Othman at the State Guest House Padma. The Foreign Secretary thanked the High Commissioner for excellent contribution to the development of bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Malaysia. The departing Ambassador also expressed her deep satisfaction while serving in Bangladesh and mentioned that Bangladesh would always occupy a special place in her heart. Heads of Mission from the South and the Southeast Asian countries resident in Dhaka as well as Secretaries of different Ministries and the senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs attended the event.

BANGLADESH EMBASSY IN TOKYO ARRANGES DINNER FOR DIET MEMBERS

As part of the image building activities abroad, the Embassy of Bangladesh in Tokyo organized the Second Annual Dinner in honor of the members of Japan-Bangladesh Parliamentary Friendship League (JBPFLL) in city's New Otani hotel on 05 November 2015. About a dozen of Diet members as well as 20 top-level Japanese business leaders from Mitsubishi, Toshiba, Toray, Marubeni, Obayashi, Itochu etc. and high level Government officials were present on the occasion. Japan Foundation President Ambassador Hiroyasu Ando, President of Japan-Bangladesh Society Ambassador Matsuhiro Horiguchi, and President of Japan Educational Exchanges and Services Ambassador Masayuki Inoue were also present at the event. Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister of Japan and the President of Japan-Bangladesh Parliamentary Friendship League Taro Aso, MP attended the event as the chief guest. The Parliamentary League was reconstituted last year with 65 members. The event began with welcome remarks by Secretary General of the League Ichiro Tsukada, MP. In his remarks, the Ambassador congratulated Japan on its recent election as a non-Permanent member of UN Security Council and had mentioned that as a peace loving nation and genuine development partner, Japan always enjoys special respect from the people around the world including Bangladesh. He has assured Japanese Diet members and business leaders about top security measures taken by the Government of Bangladesh for all foreign nationals living in Bangladesh including the Japanese. He requested the members of Parliamentary League to convey to the Japanese Government not to be deterred by the recent isolated and heinous act of killing a Japanese national in Bangladesh and keep the momentum of our decade long economic engagement. He also urged them for their continued engagement and frequent visit to Bangladesh to boost up existing bilateral relations. He had mentioned that Japan would remain an important partner in Bangladesh's march towards prosperity as envisioned by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Deputy Prime Minister Taro Aso in his remarks appreciated the launching of 'Comprehensive Partnership' between the two countries last year. He particularly noted Bangladesh's withdrawal of candidature for a non-permanent seat of the UN Security Council in support of Japan and mentioned that it helped a lot in Japan's winning of the bid by 184 votes out of 193 UN member countries. Appreciating Bangladesh's stable growth of 6%-7% for last several years, Aso had mentioned that not many countries showed such a stable growth and he pledged continued Japanese cooperation and support for Bangladesh.

BANGLADESH HIGH COMMISSIONER MEETS SRI LANKAN PRIME MINISTER AND SPEAKER

On 19 November 2015, Bangladesh High Commissioner to Sri Lanka Tarik Ahsan paid a courtesy call on the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Ranil Wickremesinghe at the Temple Trees (Prime Minister's House) in Colombo. During the meeting, the Bangladesh High Commissioner conveyed the greetings of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe. The High Commissioner lauded the vision and commitment of the Prime Minister for reforms in the political and economic domains of Sri Lanka. He sought the support of the Prime Minister in the ongoing efforts for advancing bilateral cooperation between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. He focused on the areas of cooperation in trade, investment, shipping, fisheries, culture and people-to-people contact. He also recalled the excellent record of cooperation between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka on the multilateral plane. He described Bangladesh as a bridge between South Asia and South East Asia, something that Sri Lanka can utilize as its gateway to the region. The Prime Minister extended regards to his Bangladesh counterpart. He thanked Bangladesh for her support in the recent election of Sri Lanka to the Executive Board of UNESCO. He assured the High Commissioner of full cooperation of his government in his efforts for deepening the bilateral relations. Expressing satisfaction at the existing friendly relations, he viewed that the natural affinity between the two peoples based on commonalities of history, culture, values and ethnicity should be carried forward for enhancing meaningful cooperation. He expressed interest in further consolidating economic relations with Bangladesh from a regional perspective also. The meeting acknowledged the need for regular exchange of high-level visits as well as holding of meetings of consultative mechanisms existing between the two countries. The importance of concluding negotiations on a number of agreements under process was also recognized. On 18 November 2015, High Commissioner Tarik Ahsan had a one-to-one lunch meeting with the Speaker of the Sri Lankan Parliament Karu Jayasuriya at the latter's office in Colombo. Their discussion particularly focused on issues of political development & bilateral cooperation between Parliaments of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka and Constitutional reforms for the Sri Lankan Parliament. In this regard, the Speaker expressed his intention to form the Bangladesh-Sri Lanka Parliamentary Friendship Association in the current Sri Lankan Parliament soon. He also conveyed his invitation to the Speaker of Bangladesh Parliament to pay an official visit to Sri Lanka along with a parliamentary delegation at a mutually convenient time.

BANGLADESH CONSULATE IN HONG KONG ORGANIZES HEALTH TALK FOR THE DOMESTIC HELPERS

On 01 November 2015, Bangladesh Consulate in Hong Kong coordinated and organized a 'Health Talk and Cooking Class' for the Domestic Helpers of Bangladesh origin. The program was facilitated by the 'Equal Opportunities Commission' and 'Family Planning Association (FPA)' of the Hong Kong government. The FPA is running a three-year project- "Sexual & Reproductive Health Education Program for Marginalized Women's Groups", funded by the Community Chest of Hong Kong since 2014. The target group includes ethnic minority women, migrant workers, female sex workers, women with intellectual disability and female drug abusers. This project aims at empowering them through increased access to sexual and reproductive health knowledge and preventive health care services. A total of 22 domestic helpers of Bangladesh from three different agencies attended the program.