

Luncheon Roundtable Meeting with US Chamber of Commerce

Statement

by

H. E. Sheikh Hasina

Hon'ble Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Hotel Grand Hyatt, New York.

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

**Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Business Leaders,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

Assalamu Alaikum and Good afternoon

I am delighted to be with you again to speak about business opportunities in Bangladesh. I thank the US Chamber of Commerce-USCC for arranging this event.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It makes me proud to inform you that, in March 2018, the UN declared Bangladesh eligible for graduation from LDC group to a developing country. We have been implementing Vision 2021 since 2009 to materialize the dream of the Father of the Nation Banglabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Using graduation as stepping stone we are now working on the Vision 2041 of becoming a developed nation.

Bangladesh has come out of aid dependence as we have aligned our economy with international trade and labour market. During our nine and a half years in Government, the economy grew at an average rate of 6.6 percent. Reaching seven point eight-six (7.86) percent last fiscal, the growth is expected to be eight point two-five (8.25) percent in the next fiscal. Inflation declined to 5.4 from 12.3 percent. Foreign currency reserve has grown more than 9 times to over USD 33 billion in 2018 from a mere USD 7.5 billion in 2009. Poverty rate has fallen to 21.8 percent from 41.5 percent in 2006.

I am happy that the USA is our single largest trading partner with bilateral trade of USD 7.5 billion in 2016-17 and second largest investment partner with investment of over USD 3 billion.

Distinguished Business Community,

Technology and innovation are bringing fast economic transformation in Bangladesh. Having gained self-sufficiency, Bangladesh is now the 3rd largest producer of vegetables, 4th largest producer of rice, and 3rd largest producer of inland fisheries in the world. Currently the second largest RMG exporter with exporting USD 30.61 (Thirty point six-one) billion in last fiscal, Bangladesh is poised to become the first soon.

Bold entrepreneurship and drive for export diversification with FDI are facilitating new sectors to emerge. The **Pharmaceutical industry** is one of those which is currently meeting 98% of local demand and exporting to about 125 countries. **Ship building** is another one. We are exporting medium-size ocean-going vessels to even European countries. Knowledge-based **ICT sector** is thriving on 136 million mobile phone users, 73 million of them using mobile data.

Energy, crucial for high growth, is opening up opportunities for FDI. Electricity production capacity has reached 20 thousand Megawatt this month from a mere 3 thousand 200 Megawatt in 2009.

Ongoing work on a 2 thousand 400-Megawatt nuclear power plant along with several coal fired plants is advancing our plan to generate 40 thousand megawatt electricity by 2030 and 60 thousand megawatt by 2041. Ten percent of the electricity will come from renewable energy.

Distinguished Business Leaders,

Bangladesh's strategic location is making us an emerging hub for regional connectivity, foreign investments and global outsourcing. We have taken connectivity initiatives to connect our Indian, Chinese and South East Asian neighbours.

Bangladesh could be a gateway to a market of 4 billion people- itself offering a strong and growing market of 160 million. Delta Plan 2100, taken up in cooperation with the Dutch Government, is to secure water safety, food security and economic growth by preventing floods and erosion.

We have undertaken ten growth and employment generating mega projects. We are ready to take up more in diversified areas of infrastructure, connectivity and high-tech for a sustainable double digit growth. To the thrust sectors, I add growing services sectors of banking and finance, tourism, health and education.

We also want to open new avenues of blue economy. We are establishing 100 Exclusive Economic Zones for new industries and investment at both public and private sectors. Two dozen high-tech parks are ready.

Bangladesh has the most liberal investment policy in South Asia with **most attractive incentives** and highest profit rate. It includes protection of FDI by law, incentives like generous tax holiday, concessionary duty on import of machinery, duty free import of raw materials, remittances on royalty, 100% foreign equity, unrestricted exit policy, and full repatriation of dividend and capital on exit.

Other advantages include the young, committed and easily trainable workforce with highly competitive wages, cheaper costs of setting business, access to a large duty free quota free market, low cost electricity and water, Bangladesh's good credit rating, minimum risk factors, and fast technology adaptability.

We also have **challenge ahead** of Fourth Industrial Revolution looming in the horizon. I invite you to come to Bangladesh with your businesses, technology, and innovations for mutual benefit. Please join us in our **journey of shared profit and prosperity**. I assure you of my Government's full support and cooperation.

Thank you all.

Khoda Hafez.
Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.
Long Live Bangladesh-US Friendship.
