



BANGLADESH NEWSLETTER

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Bangladesh Embassy, Stockholm



Editorial

Bangladesh has observed the 52nd anniversary of Independence on 26th March this year. Bangladesh declared her independence on 26 March 1971, and after 09-month long bloody liberation war, Bangladesh achieved her independence on 16 December 1971. In the blood-soaked road of independence, Bangladesh had suffered a mass genocide and witnessed supreme sacrifice by two hundred thousand women and 03 million heroic freedom fighters who gave their lives.

Since then, Bangladesh traversed a remarkable journey of development despite major challenges from natural calamities to adverse impacts of climate change to disruptions in democratic process, and most recently 01 million Rohingyas who was given shelter in Bangladesh in the face of persecution in their homeland Myanmar. Today, Bangladesh is on an incredible journey to become a developed and smart nation by 2041 as per the country's vision 2041. The recent socio-economic successes earned Bangladesh a new title - "Development superstar".

Through this newsletter, the Embassy is making efforts to inform the people living in Sweden, Finland and Norway about stories of success of Bangladesh and its people living both in home and abroad. This Newsletter shares the activities of the Embassy as well.

Mehdi Hasan
Ambassador

Bangladesh Stories

Story 01: 52 years on, Bangladesh's rape camp survivors speak out

[On March 26, Bangladesh observed its 52nd anniversary of Independence. Through a 09-month long liberation war, Bangladesh achieved her independence on 16 December 1971. In that bloody liberation war, 03 million martyrs gave their lives and two hundred thousand women were tortured and brutalised.

The following article on 'BANGLADESH's rape victims of the liberation war' was published in 'The Guardian'. The article may be accessed through the link:

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/apr/03/52-years-bangladesh-birangona-women-mass-rape-survivors>]

Story 02: Bangladesh's riverine villages are benefiting from clever design

[Bangladesh is one of the worst victims of Climate Change. People of Bangladesh are constantly adapting to the adverse effects of climate change.

The following article was published in the Culture section of the print edition of 'Economist' under the headline "Walking on water"]

Summary:

Architectural innovations and adaptations are helping to bring permanence to a flood-prone land.

Gaibandha is a rural district in northern Bangladesh. The soils of Gaibandha are rich with the silt that the river has carried down for millennia, and the villagers produce many winter and summer crops in that fertile land. The river makes the land fertile in one way, and on the other washes away houses and everything during the monsoon. Riverine islands made of silt and sand known as *chars*—some several kilometres long—form, vanish and reform in an endless cycle of erosion and accretion. Now climate change is making weather patterns more unpredictable and the downpours more powerful.

More than 07 million people live in the *char* districts of Bangladesh. So, how these char people survive in these conditions?

Friendship, a non-profit organisation, takes a more intuitive and innovative approach for this Char lands. According to Kashef Mahboob Chowdhury, an architect, the best design would be “a teardrop-shaped island which has a rounded elliptical front”. This layout would allow water to pass by quickly with minimal damage to the island (as in the figure below).

By Mr. Chowdhury's design, plinth design is a boat-like form about three metres high, 113 metres long and 73 metres wide. Villagers' huts line the rim. Since flood water is not safe to drink, in the centre of the plinth village is a hole for rainwater; in the dry season when the pond is low, planted gourds and squash clamber up the sides. Latrines are situated away from the settlement. It is a simple design of genius!

Two-dozen such plinth villages have now been built in the *char* districts, each costing about \$50,000. The waters took two early examples, but the others flourish. The most impoverished families get first dibs to live on the plinths. When the waters rise, outlying families come up with their livestock to join them.



Figure: Gaibandha district

Story 03: How a woman entrepreneur started with 01 SEK and became millionaire

This is the story of Ms. Irene Parveen, a woman entrepreneur in Bangladesh. Irene Parveen started tailoring with a capital of only 10 taka (01 SEK) in a world of poverty. Now she is the owner of two big clothing manufacturing companies named 'Ananya Boutiques' and 'Ananya Exclusive'. She overcame poverty with relentless efforts and achieved success. Apart from business, she is serving the poor and needy people through various social organizations. So, how did all these happen?

Irene Parveen had 9 brothers and sisters in their poor family. Even if the father received government ration, it was not enough. Her mother used to earn some money by making clothes for local girls. Irene Parveen learned sewing from her mother. After finishing her Secondary education, Irene Parveen got married to a small businessman. Shortly after the marriage, her father-in-law died and all the responsibilities of the family fell on her husband. So, Irene wanted to help the family by doing the sewing she learned from her mother. Then Irene started the journey with a capital of 10 taka (01 SEK) in cash. Day by day the work orders increased. Then she thought of something bigger.

In 1998, she received training from the Directorate of Youth Development. Along with that, she set up a sewing training center in a house in the city with a loan of 25 thousand Taka (2500 SEK). There she trained women on block-batik work. Currently, the number of employees in her organization is 200. For becoming a successful woman entrepreneur, she was awarded Shrestha Jayita at the district level in the category of economically independent women in 2018. Earlier in

2002, Irene also received an award as a successful self-worker from the Department of Youth Development.

Successful entrepreneur Irene Parveen is also involved in various social organizations. Currently, she is the Organizing Secretary of Sherpur District Branch of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Vice President of Sherpur District Parliament of Udichi Artist Group and Director of Sherpur Women Chamber. Through these organizations and personal initiatives, she supports the needy people in various ways including legal assistance. Besides, she works to prevent violence against women, empower women, implement women's rights. Through her organization and work, other women are also becoming self-reliant. She is also playing an important role in creating new entrepreneurs.



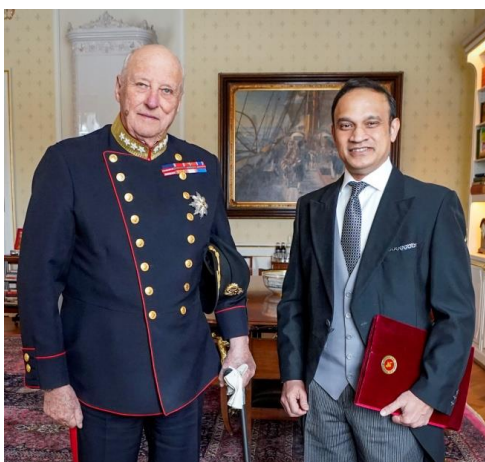
Figure: Woman entrepreneur Irene Parveen

[In Bangladesh, there is a boost in the number of women entrepreneurs in recent times, which increased three times on average during the pandemic. Female participation in labour force in Bangladesh is the highest in South Asia. The country is also the 1st in Gender equality in South Asia and 9th globally in political empowerment of woman.]

Embassy Activities

Ambassador Mr. Mehdi Hasan Presents Letter of Credence to the King of Norway

Mr. Mehdi Hasan, Ambassador of Bangladesh to Sweden (concurrently accredited to Norway) presented his credentials to His Majesty King Harald V at the Royal Palace on 16 March 2023. The ambassador highlighted the priorities of the government of Bangladesh in line with the Vision 2041 to become a Developed and Smart Nation by 2041. His majesty the King of Norway expressed satisfaction over the bilateral relations between the two countries and appreciated the role of the Government of Bangladesh in poverty alleviation and socio-economic development of Bangladesh.



Ambassador of Bangladesh held meetings with dignitaries of Sweden & Norway

Ambassador of Bangladesh H.E. Mr. Mehdi Hasan called-on the Hon'ble Foreign Minister of Norway Ms. Anniken Huitfeldt at Oslo. They discussed whole gamut of bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Norway with particular focus on rohingya issue, green transition, energy, sustainable solutions etc. Norwegian Foreign Minister highly appreciated the recent development of Bangladesh and expressed wish for further cooperation with Bangladesh in the said areas.



Ambassador Mehdi Hasan also had meeting with Ms. Anneli Hulthen, Governor, Skåne County; Ms. Carina Nilsson, Mayor of Malmö and Ms. Annika Annerby, President, Skåne Regional council at the Governor's residence in Malmö. The meeting discussed about recent social and economic scenarios of Malmö & Skåne region as a whole; and possible cooperation with Bangladesh in different sectors.



Ambassador Mehdi Hasan also held meeting with Ms. Kerstin Tham, Vice-Chancellor of Malmö University and her team including Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Head of International office. They discussed, among others, on symbiotic approaches among stakeholders for sustainable and innovative solutions and possible collaboration with universities of Bangladesh.



Ambassador Mehdi Hasan also had meeting with Ms. Anna Ferry, Head of Department for Trade Promotion, Nation Branding and CSR, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden. They discussed the present trade relationship between Bangladesh and Sweden, business opportunities in Bangladesh and ways to expand cooperation for furthering trade and investment.



Bangladesh Embassy, Stockholm observed Independence Day & National Day of Bangladesh

Bangladesh Embassy, Stockholm celebrated the 52nd anniversary of Independence and National Day of Bangladesh with joy and festivity. Ambassadors, officials from Swedish Foreign Ministry and other Swedish organizations, members of international organizations and invited guests attended the event.



Bangladesh Embassy, Stockholm observed Birth Anniversary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman & National Children's Day of Bangladesh

Bangladesh Embassy observed 103rd Birth Anniversary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman & National Children's Day of Bangladesh on 17 March 2023. Embassy arranged Painting and Quiz competition for the children and gave prizes to all participating children.





Bangladesh Embassy, Stockholm observed Genocide Day

Bangladesh Embassy observed Genocide Day on 25th March. On the night of 25th March in 1971, a mass genocide in the name of 'operation searchlight' occurred to the unarmed people of Bangladesh. Bangladesh wants this genocide to be recognised internationally.



Bangladesh Embassy, Stockholm observed Historic 07th March

Bangladesh Embassy observed 'Historic 07th March' on 07 March 2023. On this day in 1971, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman gave this historic speech, which was the driving force for the people of Bangladesh to the path of liberation war and independence. UNSECO recognized this speech as part of the 'World's Documentary Heritage'.



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Bangladesh Embassy, Stockholm conducted Consular Camp in Malmö, Sweden

Bangladesh Embassy conducted a day-long Consular Camp in Malmö, Sweden on 14 March 2023. A good number of Bangladeshi people got the consular service from the Consular Camp.



Bangladesh Community Page

Successful Bangladeshi people in Sweden:

1. **Muazzam Choudhury** was born in Sylhet. He graduated from BUET, came to Sweden in 1976 and did his master's in industrial engineering at KTH. He then worked for Sandvik and a consulting company for about 5 years. He founded the IT consultancy company MSC Konsult AB 1987, which was listed at the stock exchange Nasdaq in Stockholm 1998. He worked as CEO and chairman of the board of the company until 2015. He was named the businessman of the year in Danderyd (1996). The company was listed in 'Europe 500' as one of the fastest growing companies in Europe in two consecutive years. He was in the board of directors for Stockholm Chamber of Commerce for 06 years, employers Association Almega (Tech Sverige) for 12 years and a member of committee for small and medium size enterprises (SME) within the Confederation of Swedish Industries for 10 years.

He also graduated from Harvard Business School in an Executive Education Program (OPM) in 1997. He wrote his biography "Muazzam, en svensk från Bangladesh" in 2012 which has been translated to Bangla. As a retired person, he is now working as an advisor to the owner of Minnovation Group, a fast-growing consulting company in Stockholm. He is the chairman of the board of a trust under Rotary Djursholm Svitiod which awards stipend to the school students in Danderyd. He is also a member of several clubs in Djursholm and "Köpmansklubb", a 125-year-old club for businessmen in Stockholm.



2. **Mohammad Nizam Uddin** is the Regional Head of Finance for Apple Inc for the Northern Europe Region. He and his team lead and support finance functions in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Greenland, and Faroe Island since July 2018. Before joining Apple Inc, Mr. Nizam also worked at Ericsson over eleven years and led various global and regional positions; Head of Business Finance, Group Functions at Ericsson HQ Sweden, Chief Financial officer (CFO), Chief Commercial Officer (CCO) and Director Administration, at Ericsson Bangladesh, Regional Business Controller, Ericsson Malaysia and Regional Financial Analyst, Vietnam. In his earlier career, he also worked for BAT Bangladesh, Novartis BD, and BASF BD. Mr. Nizam is a fellow member (FCMA) of The Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Bangladesh (ICMAB), Associate member (ACMA) of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) London, UK and secured a degree in Masters in Commerce. He also received an Executive Leadership Diploma from Stockholm School of Economics (SSE).



3. **Atiqur Rahman** became the board member and Secretary of the Swedish Cricket Board (Svenska cricketförbundet) (www.cricket.se) for 2023 and 2024. He is the first Bangladeshi Swedish Citizen who have been elected for this position. Atiqur brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the role, having been actively involved in cricket for several years. Atiqur has previously served as the Chairman of the Borås Cricket Klubb, Sweden since 2016. Atiqur Rahman moved from Bangladesh in 2010 to complete his master's in informatics. He has completed his bachelor's in computer science & engineering and master's in development studies from Bangladesh. Before moving to Sweden, Atiqur

Rahman worked with different corporate houses and development organization in Bangladesh. Now Mr. Rahman is working as an IT Project Manager in Logent Group, Sweden.



Events in Bangladesh

- **Bangladesh Circular Economy Summit:**

<https://bangladeshcirculareconomysummit.com/>



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