

The logo features a blue geometric shape composed of interconnected lines and dots, resembling a stylized network or a map of the Bay of Bengal region.

Bay of Bengal Conversation 2023

Rising Tides

MINISTERIAL SPEECH

M A Mannan, Minister of Planning of Bangladesh

M A Mannan, “Good afternoon, of course tons of apologies. I have no excuse actually but I had a very big excuse because there was a big meeting I had to attend that. and I could not leave until the VVIP had left that is the custom here in our country. in mostly other countries also so of course my apologies again. and again to you distinguished guests from many countries from various regions I would like to express my warm welcome to you to Bangladesh. and I would like to also thank Zillur and his Organization for organizing this very I think very important event. although I don't know much about the insides of the conference as yet I haven't had the time to go through the papers but as it is mentioned the Bay of Bengal my home I know it very well fairly well it emotions in my mind Bengal Bengal our Bay it is our b b of Bengal and the rising Tides conversation on this so it must be it's very relevant uh to us in in Bangladesh the rising tides are something for you gentlemen and ladies uh to be to see and to be able to express your feelings and your your uh what you know about these Rising tides for us in Bangladesh for me personally uh we feel that this increasing interest attention to our region not only from immediate neighborhood but beyond this is something excites us this is very pleas pleasing uh for decades for centuries even the second Millennium as a whole I can say we had been in a kind of a stoer back backyard to larger bigger entity India but then India itself was in a kind of stoer in a different situation all together being colonized being being occupied in in in so many ways and since we were at that time part of the greater Indian subcontinent we had been part of the same want to say good or bad that's a different matter for the historians to decide for the miserable period of a thousand years altogether I say that's my personal feeling so having come out of that Millennia miserable Millenia for Bangladesh uh we have achieved our independence in 1971 one and we have achieved in a very difficult different way compared to our neighbors our our neighbors negotiated their independence big neighbor India including Pakistan Sri Lanka but we did not we are not part of

the negotiation we are part of the deal so we had a very bad bad deal we thought so we fought a Liberation war of Our Own split from the system that that we are part of in Pakistan and really really in this whole region we are one entity one state or one nation which eared its own independence to blood and toil through Battles Through sacrifices so why I say this not to express my anger or anything just to put things in the context that Bangladesh is a different kind of a country than the other countries of the region because we fought died in millions and we were able to reach Independence and we had very big goals also our Liberation war was fought by our under the leadership of our great father of the nation bongu sh muj rman at his courts millions of people we had very clear definite goals of the many goals four were outstanding goals declared goals one was of course among many one was to liberate their people out of poverty to be able to uh manage a better standard of living for the millions and to be able to join the march of humanity that was one major goal of the four goals that our founding fathers had intiated for our Liberation War so we are in that phase as yet we achieved Independence in 1971 but we had our periods of uh ups and downs since then the father of the nation was killed within 3 and a half years along with his family members a very miserable episode a very miserable time in our national history there have been periods of military rule all together about two decades of rule by our own military and then after a lot of struggle domestically our political party which Fought The Liberation War Bangladesh aami League finally could come back into the stage and it's present leader of my my prime minister our prime minister under her leadership sh leadership we are pursue a major goal number one goal is to is to is to achieve economic uh economic emancipation economic Justice uh A Better Living for our Millions so in that struggle or in that battle or in that uh uh the Big Goal that we pursue we definitely we we want friends we our declared goal is to have friendship with all our neighbors and declared goal is malish toward none we don't want to pick up pick up fights

with anybody in the world we want to be left in peace allowed to work our ways and allowed to be able to cultivate our talents whatever we have and come out of the economic uh misery that we were until yesterday I can proudly say that maybe maybe tentative though we have been able to turn around and make some move forward in the last one and a half decades particularly during which presid prime minister has been at the Helm of the Affairs I had the Good Fortune of being with her as a member of parliament this is my third term and as a cabinet minister in The Last 5 Years prior to that a junior minister in the previous cabinet so I can say with confidence that if two things are required now to know our neighborhood to know our potential to know what our Bay of Bengal is to know what our rivers are to know what our coastlines are to know who our neighbors are that's the immediate requirement and in that light these sort of uh conferences be Bengal conversation you are talking about B Bengal and in the immediate neighborhood principally us I would say in this meeting uh the new Spotlight that has been shared on us and you're discussing various aspects of that uh that new Spotlight that is turned on us so I as a member of the cabinet as a member of the ruling party in Bangladesh we appreciate we think it's a very useful academic study uh we would like to at least if we can't share with you in direct work at least to be able to listen to you and to learn from your conversations and use those what we learned in our work particularly in my work specifically for some of you this may be a little I have to explain what is planning in Bangladesh for some of my friends from the Western countries planning is a not a very friendly word not a very not a very uh not a very relevant word in their context but in our context it's a very relevant word why we started in 7271 with nothing in hand devastated Warth economically backed as I have said there was hardly any private sector in our country like many were in the Western countries who were on their own uh contributing to the economy in Bengal or Bangladesh our Bangladesh there were in there was no private sector at all to be mentioned

whatever private sector was in the hands of uh entrepreneurs from the other wing of Pakistan so we were faced an agrarian economy hardly any infrastructure rivers and reefs coastlines forests sundarbans and we had uh if no private sector as I said and very little government sector so in that light plus our founding fathers were excited confused by then uh many uh Global uh ideas ideas of socialism ideas of being fair to everyone ideas of taking over all the national wealth together and trying to build up so in that light the Planning Commission or the planning Ministry was one of the first things that our founding fathers created in Bangladesh so initially it was the father of the nation himself our Our Father of the nation and then since then uh times have passed much water has flown on our Rivers our Padma our Ganges our Brahmaputra and there have been changes in our political situation also as I mentioned there have been periods of military rule Who had who really the globally also the scenario changed a lot Soviet collapse uh ideas of ideas of pristine and glorious ideas of social equality was put in the back burner there was there was there there was more emphasis given on creating wealth more emphasis was given to create wealth and to uh be able to work so that some sort of a uh some sort of living conditions can be created in the rural for the rural masses who can come out of poverty so poverty elimination eradication reduction became one major goal and idea of the all all wealth being taken by the State and being uh invested that idea went on the backside or we adopted a free market policy or rather uh because uh we had no choice we had to do it the global situation had changed as I said and our present government we are committed to free market philosophy uh we have promoted uh we have uh helped a private sector of our own to come up and make their contributions I can say there are many important people from my country also who are very well informed people our private is very vibrant very big and as of now in terms of money in terms of uh values about 80% of our national wealth is in the hands of the private sector but one major catch major infrastructure roads and bridges and rails

the private sector could not do it they don't have the means for doing anything there so we had to do that health care or whatever standard minimal standard to Middle standard private sector had no immediate incentive to invest in the health sector so we had to move in there with our resources very minimal resources uh literacy I'm not talking about education as yet literacy as such we are hardly 20 25% of our people are literate in 1971 when we became independent so we had to adopt policies uh take programs uh to promote literacy so that well I I I don't have to explain why it is necessary so these major areas literacy or education uh healthare infrastructure again power electricity these were the areas that our government had to move in because private sector could not come there because of lack of their own resources and and and their motives for coming there who are not strong enough so how did you do it we don't have much resources of our own we don't have oil and gas we don't even have intellectual power people who are semi semil literate technologically we are quite well way down so we started borrowing from International organizations the World Bank Asian development Bank Islamic Development Bank and we borrowed also from government to government directly so by borrowing and by investing in our our agriculture sector small and medium industry sector we were trying to switch on uh latent energies in our economy so that they could come out and make contributions but again I would say the number one area that we had to look in and very correctly was infrastructure it's Riv countries you know hundreds of rivers are here we can't move very easily from one District to another so we started building roads and bridges not of global standard as yet but at least we could wait through or we could drive our small vehicles through so infrastructure infrastructure was given very very high high priority and electricity this government government of Shina to her credit I would say everyone agrees when she took over in 2009 for the second time 2009 hardly 25% the rural population had access to electricity in a country where 80% people live in the rural

areas she declared that we shall have electricity by 2021 by whatever means she took some very courageous stand some very risky stand and we were able to reach Warriors grid lines sub grid lines to every home in Bangladesh that's a big big achievement I take pride personally most of these Home St are lying around in various places of country so that achievement that achievement is something that has uh switched lot of latent energy in our people and we gave attention to agriculture also which was our main stay more than 50% of the labor were engaged in agriculture and for food security it was number one item so we researched we put in money for agriculture research we want for fertilizers irrigation insecticides and in other ways and 2009 when we are short of food critically short of food now we are just about equal to our present requirements we produce about 40 million tons of cial grains of various kinds principally rice and we can say with pride this is the first time in our history of Thousand Years we are able to feed everyone with our own grown resources I said tentative because not much is left just about so if there's a big disaster something happens either by human fault or by something natural order or ordained we can again fall below but that is a fact we know about it and we are making efforts just today just today this morning we are talking about this very matter when from where I'm coming we have to uh raise our agriculture to to higher level than what it is now and our government is putting a lot of attention on that and of course uh our main target Still Remains as a group the rural population 75 to 80% they are the people who fought the Liberation war made huge contributions had very little of their own they still remain in the Villages many of them outling no roads to the Village electricity has gone now we have to build roads we are building roads fly quality is not Global not even Regional I would say let me be let me be truthful about it but we have put out roads almost almost to every village other roads we have built other roads which now we have to go and uh make paved roads in due course so this is just to share with you some of the difficulties that we Face the difficulties

which doesn't necessarily make us scared we are not frightened we are facing face we are confronting these face to face and of course with help from Friends friends from all over the world particularly the igos intergo organizations like the World Bank ADP I must mention again and again we have received we borrowed these are no do outs let me be very honest about it we are heavily indebted country this moment but we are also at the same time able to say that we are can we are paying off our debt of the past on a regular basis we have never defaulted we hope this critical time that is at this moment uh Global situation is not very friendly Ukraine war which is almost become uh a permanent Future IT Sims now for the last two years and there are some other new developments one just now going around in the Middle East in the last 2 three days so these things does create problems for us but with friends like you and others Beyond and learning from you from your discussions from conversations like this uh we are able to pick up ideas but not necessarily uh sort of uh orders not necessarily do this or don't do that we listen we cook it in our own Kitchen in our own way and with our own experience which you can't match anyone from outside we are sons of the soil or Daughters of the soil we mix up our learnings from you and we draw plans and programs for our people that is the place where I work personally I'm the minister for planning we have fiveyear plans besides fiveyear plans we also pursue some Global plans like sdgs you know very well it's a global uh even adopted sdg plans so we blend both the plans our own 5year plans sdgs there's no contradiction both are for the welfare of human beings and we part both together we hope we hope by 2031 we will be able to sit strongly in the middle income group we at the bottom of the middle- income group now we are not LDC ASE of today by 26 we will be completely in the middle income Group by 31 our position in the middle income group will be Consolidated and our vision for 21 2041 another 18 years from now 19 years from now we want to reach what is called developed country I tell what is called because I have to explain that

in detail one many of you know even now materially developed better drinking water better sanitation better literacy tolerably good roads fairly Good Health Care these are the things we want to achieve by 2041 I think we are confident we are right on track but again uh I'm just sharing with you uh we right on track but we have to do much more and in our in our efforts toward doing more we require as I said uh your support and your friendship and we to learn from you so Z I want to thank you for this opportunity and once again apologies for late being late thank you