

Bangladesh's journey of hope under the leader

The country's vibrant leadership is leaving no stone unturned to achieve goals of economic growth



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Exactly eleven years back, in the eyes of the international community, Bangladesh was seen as a poor, corruption-plagued struggling nation. Ruling elites were busy in rampant looting of public wealth while former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's son was behaving like a mafia king, who had formed a band of culprits and criminals not only to help him in robbing off hundreds of millions of dollars through numerous forms of crimes and corruption but also in treating the people of this country as slaves of his desire. Thanks to the popular masses of the country for giving a landslide victory to Bangladesh Awami League under the leadership of Shaikh Hasina during the 2008-general election. Should it not happen, pro-Islamist and anti-Semitic Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and its political darling Jamaat e Islami Bangladesh (JIB) would already have turned this country into another Afghanistan – if not even worse!

Founder of BNP, Maj Gen Ziaur Rahman was a notoriously radical Muslim with extreme anti-Semitic mindset. Few of his top allies were Saddam Hussein and Muammar Al Gaddafi. From the list of his allies, it can be easily understood, Zia was an anti-West and fully Islamist individual, who was having the dream of turning Bangladesh into an Islamic republic.

Following the death of Zia, his wife Khaleda Zia came to power twice – in 1991 and 2001 – and during each of her tenures, she had shown Bangladesh the ugliest example of state-patronised corruption, nepotism and of course appeasing of

radical Islam. Members of her family became filthily wealthy through corruption, while her own younger brother Maj (Retired) Sayeed Iskander established a business company with Khaleda's sons and made tonnes of money not only through corruption but also by taking hundreds of millions of Taka from the banks. During those two tenures of BNP, Sayeed Iskander and Tarique Rahman emerged as the mightiest figures in Bangladesh. They were making money by receiving bribes and kickbacks from each of the purchase contracts, while they did not hesitate in taking part in some extremely nasty business – such as dealing in drugs and money laundering.

For years, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party was having China as its best friend. But, soon after it came to power for the second term in 2001, BNP tried to back-stab China by letting Taiwan open its economic office in Bangladesh, which clearly went against Beijing. Furthermore, Khaleda Zia had no problem in letting the Islamist forces hold rallies and processions in various cities and towns in the country – chant anti-America and anti-Israel slogan and most disturbingly – burn American and Israeli flags in broad daylight. Law enforcing agencies did not interrupt such notoriety of those Islamists as they too knew, the hearts of the ruling elites were filled with anti-US and anti-Semitic poison.

At the request of Yaseer Arafat, BNP's founding father Maj Gen Zia had sent hundreds of Bangladeshis to 'Palestine' to take part in the war against the Jewish State – kill Jews and Christians.

In 2003, the then BNP government named a bridge after the notorious jihadist group Hizbollah. The bridge is located in the southern part of Bangladesh, spanning the Batakhali River in



Sheikh Hasina addresses an election rally.

an area known as Cox's Bazaar. Justifying naming of the bridge, Salauddin Ahmed, state minister for communication told French news agency AFP, "I named the bridge Hizbollah because of our love for the Lebanese resistance group."

"Hizbollah is the only group which is fighting Israel and the bridge is named after the group as a mark of honour," he added.

The United States has identified Hizbollah as a terrorist group, meaning, BNP has a track record of not only of appeasing terrorists and militants but also of encouraging such notoriety.

After postponement and obstruction of trials into a number of corruption cases, in 2018, a court in Dhaka sentenced Khaleda Zia and her son with rigorous imprisonment in just one corruption case, while several cases already are under trial. Her son, Tarique Rahman faces conviction in a number of criminal cases as well. Although Khaleda

was sent to prison on February 18, 2018, directly from the trial court, her son Tarique Rahman remains as an absconder. It was learnt from media reports that Tarique Rahman, his wife and daughter had sought political asylum in the United Kingdom and surrendered their Bangladeshi passport. Sitting in London, Tarique has been plotting and coordinating terrorist activities in Bangladesh. He played key-role behind series of arson attacks, the murder of innocent people, rape of Hindus and Buddhists, vandalising of public and private properties during January-April, 2014. During the subsequent years, Tarique had hands behind several terrorist activities, including plots of assassinating Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and abducting her only son, Sajeeb Wajed Joy.

Despite such extreme notoriety of Tarique Rahman, British authorities neither had initiated any investigation into his activi-

As Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina remains committed in the BRI initiatives, it is the responsibility of China to help Bangladesh in smoothly implementing the infrastructural projects.

the country from becoming a rogue nation. After ten years Bangladesh now has emerged into one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Massive infrastructural development works have been continuing, while by 2030, Bangladesh economy is all set to emerge as the strongest economy in South Asia. Sheikh Hasina has also ensured the rule of law and by showing zero tolerance toward militancy and terrorism.

Although she is yet to attain success in combating corruption and the culture of nepotism.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is one of the most prominent partners in Chinese President Xi Jinping's signature Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) programme. While several countries that have earlier agreed to Belt and Road Initiative projects had suspended or terminated it Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina remains firm on her commit-

ties nor had ever warned him of consequences of using British soil for terror-plotting.

Ever since Sheikh Hasina became Prime Minister in 2009, she had dedicated rescuing Bangladesh's economy from mere bankruptcy. She also had focused on combating radical Islam and militancy, which was extremely essential for saving

Building connections through cultural



JUSTIN SIBERELL

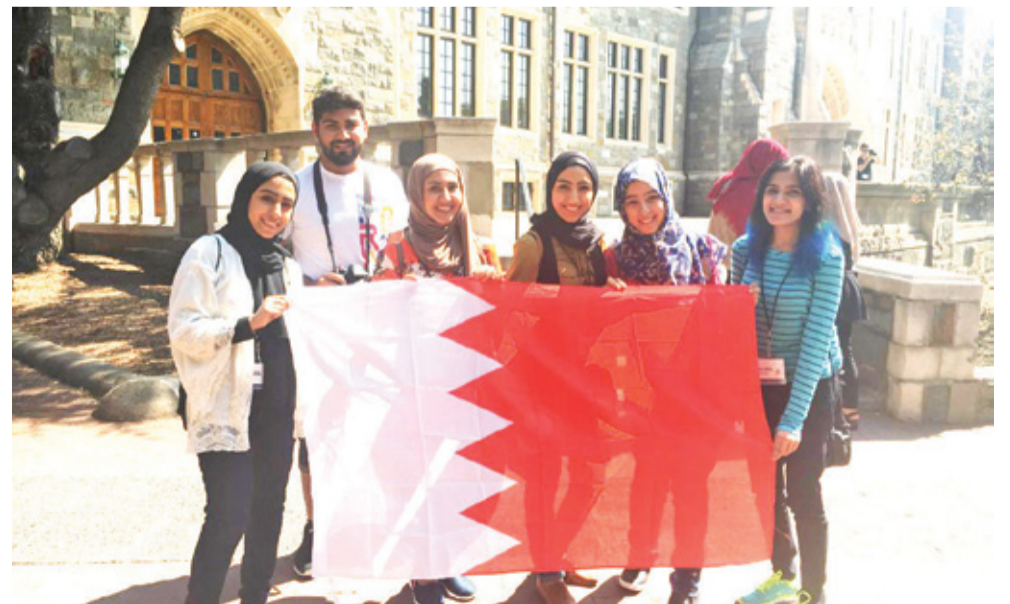
The ties between the United States and Bahrain are strong and deep. Our shared commitment to regional security and economic prosperity has been a lynchpin for the development of our two societies. In 2018, our bilateral trade in goods exceeded \$3 billion dollars, a new record and a tangible representation of the benefits of our partnership. Yet, the most meaningful link between us is the friendship we enjoy through personal and

professional relationships between the American and Bahraini people. One way that we work to expand such relationships is through cultural exchange programs. Cultural exchange fosters mutual understanding and shows the very best of what each society has to offer.

The US Embassy in Manama arranges dozens of exchanges each year, bringing artists, speakers, and performance groups to Bahrain to highlight unique aspects of American culture – beyond what Hollywood screens project and entertainment magazines highlight. Over the long arc of the US-Bahrain relationship, cultural and educational exchange programs have created common understanding and a mutual ap-

preciation. The success of these programs can often be attributed to the keen support of the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities (BACA), whose partnership we very much appreciate.

In fact, from June 26-28 another very exciting cultural outreach program will begin. The "Step Afrika" dance group will arrive from the US to participate in BACA's Summer Festival. This talented group blends the percussive dance styles historically embraced by African-American social clubs in the US with traditional African dancing, while at the same time incorporating music, storytelling, and audience participation. It makes for a uniquely American experience



A group of Bahraini students pursuing education in the US.