

Bangladesh High Commission
Canberra

Press Release

Australia to support the post-SIDR rebuilding and rehabilitation programme in Bangladesh

The Australian SBS TV Channel took interview of the Acting High Commissioner Mr. Md. Restadul Islam after the media briefing session in Sydney on 19 December 2007 and expressed their keen interest for the project for post-SIDR rebuilding and rehabilitation taken by the Government of Bangladesh, particularly project for the restoration of the Sunderbans-the UNESCO World Heritage site and the largest mangrove in the world. It is expected that this channel would broadcast a feature on the importance of the preservation and protection of the ecosystem of the Sunderbans shortly.

The Bangladesh High Commission in Canberra organized a briefing session on the post-SIDR rebuilding and rehabilitation initiatives of the Government of Bangladesh for the media people, government officials and charity organizations at the Sydney Convention Centre on 19 December 2007. Officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs, the AusAID, Austcare, representatives of local media and expatriate Bangladeshi community members were present in the briefing.

In his opening statement the Acting High Commissioner Mr. Md. Restadul Islam highlighted the need for the assistance for the capacity building for rebuilding and reconstruction of damaged coastal areas by the devastating SIDR that hit Bangladesh on 15 November 2007. He conveyed the deep appreciation of the Government of Bangladesh to the international community including the Government of Australia for quick response and support for the SIDR victims in Bangladesh.

A pictorial presentation of the severity of the damages by the cyclone SIDR was made before the audience which touched the audience. The presentation was prepared by Mr. Fida Haq, Multimedia Technologist based in Sydney.

Later a comprehensive briefing on US\$ 1 billion programmes taken by the Government of Bangladesh for rebuilding and rehabilitation for the SIDR affected areas and people including restoring of the ecosystem of the damaged Sunderbans was presented by the High Commission. It was mentioned that the Hon'ble Chief Adviser Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed recently briefed the Heads of the Diplomatic Missions and International Organisations based in Dhaka about the programmes. The Government of Bangladesh has identified that US\$ 250 million for building embankments in the coastal belt, US\$ 150 million for Sunderbans restoration, US\$ 200 million for construction of 2,000 new cyclone shelters, US\$ 100 million for rural schools rebuilding, and US\$ 300

million for roads and bridges construction would be required. In this connection, it was also mentioned that despite this challenge, the care taker government has been also implementing different reform measures for holding free, fair and credible elections by 2008. The judiciary has been separated which came to effect from 01 November 2007 and an ordinance has been promulgated on 09 December 2007 to set up the National Human Rights Commission in Bangladesh, informed by the presenter to the audience.

At the end of the session, the representative from the DFAT expressed that the Government of Australia is committed to support the cause of the development of Bangladesh. He appreciated the initiative of the High Commission to brief the post-SIDR government programmes. The representative of AusAID informed the audience that his organization has been working in Bangladesh for a long time and supported not only for the victims of SIDR cyclone but also extended assistance during the recent floods in Bangladesh. He hoped that AusAID would continue to support Bangladesh for capacity building in different areas including in those identified areas by the Government of Bangladesh. The representative of Austcare (An Australian humanitarian organization) expressed his displeasure for the response of the Australian community at large to the cyclone SIDR. However, he hoped that the Australian media would come forward to highlight the extent and gravity of the damages and loss of lives and properties by the cyclone Sidr.

Canberra, 20 December 2007
