

I am very pleased to be with you in Dhaka today. Our two countries have worked closely ever since your independence. I hope and believe it will lead to a wider range of cooperation in development, the Commonwealth, the United Nations and in promoting a moderate and pragmatic approach to international affairs.

I have come deliberately to seek your views on important political questions, to see for myself the work that Canadians and Bangladeshis undertake together, and to symbolize the continuing Canadian commitment to Bangladesh. The conditions of our countries are very different, Canada is geographically a giant, an industrially developed country, rich in natural resources, with a population of only 26 million. You have a population four times our size, but a land mass more than sixty times smaller than Canada. Your industrial infrastructure and natural resources are limited, and you face a development challenge that is beyond the comprehension of most of my countrymen.

Despite those differences, we find ourselves working together frequently in the Commonwealth, in the GATT and in the United Nations, where, incidentally, your Foreign Minister served with such distinction as President of the General Assembly. His conduct in that office not only brought honour to Bangladesh but played a significant role in achieving fundamental and enduring reforms in the United Nations system.

That is part of the tradition you are establishing. Despite daunting challenges at home, you play a full and constructive role in international affairs, and are a model of moderation and common sense.

In this region those qualities were clearly crucial to the creation of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. Your principled and clear stand on issues of global importance, including opposition to the foreign occupation of Afghanistan and Cambodia, are well known to Canada, shared by our government and applauded by our people.

In these past three days, I have visited the railway running yards and port in Chittagong, the Proshika Training Centre and Rural Maintenance in Pathalia, irrigation projects in Muhuri-Feni. I have been greatly impressed by what I have seen. Yours is a beautiful countryside-fertile, active, rich in vegetation -- but what is most impressive is the hard work and the evident enterprise of the people of Bangladesh. Your people, from the Cabinet to the villages, are obviously willing to work very hard in the face of huge challenges.