



PRESS RELEASE

Inaugural Prize for Innovations in Bangladesh Awarded by Harvard University and Anwrul Quadir Foundation

(October 15, 2007, Cambridge, MA): The lives of rural people of Bangladesh can be improved by utilizing absentee-owned fallow land more effectively and by employing the vitamin-rich fruits and leaves of the now ignored moringa tree. Those are the promises of the two prize-winning essays in an annual contest sponsored by the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government's Center for International Development and the Anwarul Quadir Foundation of Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Both 2007 essay winners will share the first prize of \$25,000. Saifuddin Ahmed, recently the general manager of a large agricultural organization in Bangladesh, seeks to raise the productivity of farmers. He employs two currently underutilized resources: land and manpower. Because some of the rural land in Bangladesh is owned by absentee landlords who lack the manpower to manage more productive forms of agriculture, much of this land lies fallow. Manpower is underutilized because of the lack of steady employment opportunities on the land. Ahmed's winning proposal creates an innovative way of managing the absentee-owned land and generating large-scale employment and the production of cash crops.

The other first prize was won by Anastasia M. Telesetsky, an environmental lawyer in San Francisco who was once an anthropologist and who seeks to empower rural villagers, especially women. Childhood malnutrition, she says, is a chronic problem in Bangladesh. Communities in Africa and Asia have rediscovered the "miracle tree of hope", moringa oleifera, and have been using its highly nutritious leaves and pods to provide families with needed vitamins and minerals that are not available from their standard food sources. Moringa is a native plant species in Bangladesh, but currently not widely cultivated. This project proposes promoting the use of moringa in low-income Bangladeshi communities through the distribution of seeds and seedlings to formal and

informal women's community groups for use in community-based small-scale gardens. The project also promotes woman to woman counseling on the cultivation of moringa plants and culturally appropriate nutrition programs.

The judging panel for the first Quadir Prize was chaired by Robert I. Rotberg, Kennedy School adjunct professor, CID associate, and director of the Belfer Center's Program on Intrastate Conflict and Conflict Resolution. The other judges were Lewis Branscomb, emeritus professor of Science, Technology and Public Policy in the Kennedy School; Tiziana Dearing, until recently executive director of the Hauser Center in the Kennedy School and now president of Catholic Charities of the Boston Archdiocese; and Debora Spar, Professor of Business Administration at Harvard Business School. The judges were assisted in their assessments by three prominent Bangladeshi advisors: Vice Chancellor Jamilur Reza Chowdhury of BRAC University; attorney Sara Hossain, now in private practice but formerly the head of the South Asia Program of the International Centre for the Legal Protection of Human Rights; and Muzamel Huq, former general manager of Grameen Bank and now managing director of Enterprise Development Company Ltd. in Dhaka.

The Quadir family established the Anwarul Quadir Foundation in 2004 at the initiative of Iqbal Z. Quadir, who taught at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and now teaches at MIT, where he recently founded the Legatum Center. The Foundation promotes economic and social progress in Bangladesh by encouraging innovations that empower its citizens. Iqbal Quadir also founded GrameenPhone in Bangladesh.

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