

# Bangladesh Development Forum

---

**Speech**

by

**Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina**

Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Dhaka

Monday

03 Falgun 1416

15 February 2010

**Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim,**

The Hon'ble Chair,  
Dear Colleagues,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

**Assalamu Alaikum and Good Morning.**

I welcome you all to the Bangladesh Development Forum 2010. The Forum is important to Bangladesh. It is our expectation that the Forum would see all participants contributing meaningfully to its success. Here, I would like to underline that from the time of Bangladesh's independence in 1971, our development partners have steadfastly supported our country's growth efforts. Therefore, a fresh, encouraging impetus from this Forum would be helpful in realizing our goal of a middle income Bangladesh by 2021.

Since the brutal murder of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and eighteen family members on 15 August 1975, Bangladesh, except for a brief spell of democracy from 1996 to 2001, experienced unconstitutional rule. This resulted in unbridled corruption, growth of extremism, escalation of inflation, food insecurity, deplorable law and order situation, and a climate of impunity. It is the credible elections of December 2008 that restored democracy, and allowed a year of positive changes.

**Distinguished Guests,**

Our government has, as in our past tenure, been successful in reducing prices of food and essentials within reach of the poor, ensure food security, improve law and order, restrain corruption, contain terrorism, and strengthen the roots of democracy. Despite global

recession, we could also keep our economy stable by infusing 500 million US dollar in export sector, subsidies in energy, and in agricultural sector as fertilizers and seeds. Our many infrastructure development projects also include the 2.4 billion US dollar Padma Bridge.

Our government's goal is to make Bangladesh a middle income country by 2021, the Golden Jubilee Year of our independence, and also to achieve "Digital Bangladesh." Therefore, initiatives have been taken for popularizing ICT and e-governance. Computers with internet connections are being distributed to schools all over the country. Measures are also on for achieving full literacy by 2014, with 100 percent student enrollment at primary level, and free books available to them all by the end of 2010.

I believe that development is possible only with democracy. Therefore, to entrench democracy, I established 44 parliamentary standing committees with seven headed by other party leaders; reintroduced Prime Minister's weekly question-hour; devolved power at the grassroots level; enacted the Right to Information Act for free flow of information; made Judiciary independent from the executive; made Anti-Corruption Commission fully independent; and strengthened Election Commission to hold free, fair elections in future.

I also believe women's equal involvement is vital for development. Therefore, in our last tenure, we adopted a National Women Development Policy for achieving gender equality. Neglected by the past government, we have revived it again. Aside five women ministers in my cabinet, there are highest number of women MPs, including 19 directly elected and 45 against reserved seats. Arrangements have been

made to recruit women in all walks of life, including in all spheres of bureaucracy, police and armed services.

I also believe that development is meaningless without social safety-nets. In our earlier tenure, we had introduced old age and distressed women pensions; Shanti Nibash or old people's homes; Karma Sanghstan Bank for assisting youth employment; Ashrayan or homes for homeless with opportunities for income generation; and "One Home – One Farm" policy in support of self-sufficiency efforts of small land owners. Our present government has initiated cash and food transfer programs; special programs for minorities; marginalized, disabled; physically challenged and the underprivileged. Our new policy also includes providing employment to one member of each poor family.

#### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In our present globalized world, cooperation, collaboration, communication and connectivity with all countries of the world, especially within regions are imperative. Therefore, within and outside SAARC, I have made moves to promote a culture of trust and friendship by encouraging our regional countries to close ranks for the common good of our peoples. In my recent visits to India and Bhutan, I have taken initiatives with respect to connectivity; sharing energy, power and water; regional security; and trade.

A threat to our development as well as food security is climate change. Our self preservation measures for adaptation, includes dredging of major rivers; land reclamation; homesteads for the displaced on land raised by silt; crop varieties attuned to climate change, protection of biodiversity etc. We have built 100 cyclone shelters with more on way. We have also approved 134 climate change action plans. To meet the costs, we have established a 100 million US dollar Climate Change Fund; and also a Multi-Donor Trust Fund with US\$ 150 million from

friends. We have intensified micro-financing for poverty reduction under Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan.

**Distinguished Guests,**

Bangladesh also recognizes needs for mitigation. Our new energy strategy is to follow a low carbon path to development, which includes social forestry, green belts to create a large carbon sink, clean coal technology, nuclear power and renewable energy. Already 600,000 solar home systems have been installed; vehicles converted to use compressed natural gas as fuel; industries producing toxic waste relocated equipped with effluent treatment facilities; and biodegradable material used as alternate to synthetics.

To support our efforts, Bangladesh needs quick disbursement of funds promised in COP 15 in Copenhagen last December, for adaptation and mitigation, particularly for MVCs, LDCs, low-lying coastal and small island countries. Our development partners should also, considering the gravity and grimness of the impacts of climate change, now ensure fulfilling their ODA targets of 0.7 % of GNI for developing countries, and 0.2% for LDCs as reaffirmed in the Brussels Program of Action.

The Forum no doubt would discuss in detail all our development related issues. The outcomes are likely to be guidelines for socio-economic strategies, a better mechanism for effective coordination among the development partners, and a stronger alignment with the vision and priorities of the government. Indeed, I thank you all for being here to enrich our development agenda, and I wish the Forum a grand success. I now declare the Bangladesh Development Forum 2010 open.

I thank you all.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu  
May Bangladesh Live Forever.

.....