

Speech by
HE Sheikh Hasina
Hon'ble Prime Minister
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Bangabandhu International Conference Centre, Agargaon, Dhaka.
Wednesday
16 Magh 1426
29 January 2020

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

The Chair,
Dear Colleagues,
Diplomats,
Representatives of Development Partners and
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalumu Alaikum and a very good morning to you all.

I welcome you all to the inaugural session of Bangladesh Development Forum 2020.

With the deepest homage, I remember the greatest Bangali of all times, Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Under whose directives through the nine months of a bloody war of independence we achieved independence and sovereign Bangladesh. I also recall the national Four-Leaders, 30 lakhs martyrs and 2 lacs abused mothers and sisters during the liberation war. Salam to all freedom fighters. I respectfully remember all martyrs of 15th August 1975.

Bangabandhu had left no idle time to reconstruct the war-ravaged country immediately after independence. He started discussions with the World Bank group as well as the bilateral donor organizations. That time World Bank had proposed to hold a consortium of the donors in Paris, the capital of France. But by the direct intervention of the Bangabandhu government, the consortium had held in Dhaka in 1973, where Bangladesh had taken lead as the President. During the course of time, that consortium of the donors is now known as 'Bangladesh Development Forum' and the then donors are now called 'Development Partners'.

The Father of the Nation had always upheld the country's interest at his top priority. He had undertaken the First Five Year Plan (1973-1978) and implemented with utmost confidence till His life amid thousands of barriers and absence of resources. We are unfortunate enough as a nation that he did not get much time for complete implementation. He was successful though he was able to transform the war-ravaged country into a least developed country status.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Forum is taking place in such a time when the country is at a definite juncture in its development journey. The year 2020 bears great importance to our national life. Father of the Nation's birth centenary will be inaugurated through a colorful celebration on the 17th of March for the whole year ahead. The celebration of the 'Golden Jubilee' of independence and also the programs of the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation will move forward together in 2021. This celebration will not be limited to the ceremony, rather it will transmit the spirit of life throughout the nation; the new generation will be inspired to build 'Golden Bangladesh' as dreamed of by the Father of the Nation as they come across the touch with this new spirit.

Awami League Government takes short, medium and long term plans to expedite the country's development. Along with the medium-term FYP, we at first formulated long term 'Bangladesh Perspective Plan, 2010-2021' to implement the Vision-2021. We are at the end of its successful implementation. The country gained the lower-middle-income status back in 2015 by World Bank Classification and met all the criteria for graduating from the least developed country status in March 2018 by UN Classification. The UN triennial review of 2021 will very likely lead the country to graduate officially from the Least Developed Country category in 2024. Meanwhile, Bangladesh has also outlined a comprehensive plan for implementing the UN-mandated Sustainable Development Goals by the year 2030.

Implementation of the 7th FYP is about to the end. Meanwhile, we formulated the draft second long term 'Bangladesh Perspective Plan, 2021-2041' intending to implement the Vision-2041. The 8th FYP will be aimed at implementing the Vision-2041. This FYP will incorporate the strategies and policies for sustainable use of water, land and the natural environment developed under the Bangladesh Delta Plan-2100. Moreover, this FYP will adopt strategies to ensure the smooth transition of Bangladesh from LDC status, and the achievements of the SDGs by 2030. **The 8th FYP will revolve around two core themes: promoting prosperity and fostering inclusiveness.**

This Forum will pave the way to take stocks of the achievements and lessons learned during the 7th FYP. It will also shed light on Bangladesh's strategic choices to reach LDC graduation, SDGs and become a developed country by 2041. I hope this Forum would also provide a unique opportunity for wide-ranging multi-stakeholder consultation to identify areas of collaboration in formulating the upcoming 8th FYP. Above all, BDF 2020 would provide a comprehensive Road Map for sustaining and building on the accomplishments over the last decade through ensuring a stronger and more inclusive partnership.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Recently, in a list of 26 countries in the world prepared by the Spectator Index, Bangladesh has been placed at the top with a score of 188% in terms of the total GDP of the last ten years. The IMF also placed Bangladesh as the 29th largest economy based on purchasing power. Currently, Bangladesh's GDP size reached about US\$320 billion, which is more than three times the GDP size in 2009, US\$102 billion.

The country has witnessed unprecedented advancement in almost all development parameters over the last decade. It has sustained robust economic growth over the last ten years averaging 6.6 percent. GDP growth for the Fiscal Year 2018-2019 reached 8.15 percent, the highest in the country's history. We were able to keep inflation within a reasonable limit, to build up foreign exchange reserves, to hold the currency exchange rate steady, to restrain fiscal deficits including shrinking external debt.

We have been continuing with remarkable progress in various socio-economic key indicators as well. The average life expectancy in Bangladesh is now 72.8 years. On the other hand, the rate of infant mortality and maternal mortality has decreased significantly. Both the diversity and severity of poverty have declined significantly. The headcount poverty reduced to

20.5 percent in 2019 from 41.5 percent in 2005 and the hard-core poverty reduced to 10.5 percent in 2019 from 25.1 percent in 2005. In recognition of Bangladesh's milestone achievements in the socio-economic front, the country has been termed as a 'Role Model of Development' globally.

We have emphasized creating regional communication and infrastructure, increasing efficiency and employment, using technology and institutional strengthening, economic and social equality, woman empowering and ensuring equal opportunities for everyone.

Our Government has established the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) which offers diversified promotional and facilitating services for accelerating industrial development of the country. The establishment of 100 economic zones in different areas across Bangladesh phase by phase is ongoing for creating more attracting more foreign investment and employment generation as well. We have created these economic zones to stop unplanned industrialization in residential and arable land.

The country needs to prepare itself for facing new trade rules and regulations that would be pertinent once it officially graduates. Our government is trying to identify appropriate policy options for trade facilitation and export diversification in light of Bangladesh's LDC graduation.

Our government has been working steadfastly to establish stronger collaboration between government, development partners, private sector, civil society and non-governmental organizations which is crucial to ensure that the development gains that have been made over the years can be sustained and become more dynamic and inclusive.

Dear Colleagues,

Bangladesh needs to protect its development environmentally sustainable. Though Bangladesh received global appreciation for its remarkable progress in climate-resilient initiatives, the insufficient resource base is limiting the impacts of climate change. Bangladesh's SDG Financing Strategy 2017 reveals that the country already has nearly a US\$1 trillion gap in the financing gap. Through this Forum, we need to identify a sufficient supply of funds for financing the adaptation and mitigation of climate change impacts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) will impact enormously in Bangladesh's economy and the job market. The country needs a proper mechanism to grab the opportunity of 4IR by identifying some policy guidelines on how Bangladesh can make the best use of its demographic transition.

Bangladesh is one of the world's fastest-growing economies, where urbanization is happening very faster. Urbanization accounts for more than 65% of the national GDP. We need your cooperation to improve service delivery mechanisms for the urban poor and vulnerable populations to ensure more inclusive and sustainable development in cities.

'My village, My Town'- was one of the main pillars of our election manifesto in 2018. The modern amenities include physical infrastructures, safe drinking water, modern healthcare, quality education, modern sewerage and waste management, increased electricity and fuel supply, high-speed internet facilities, electric equipment, and standard consumer goods have to be ensured to reach this concept.

Apart from the modernization of the agricultural sector, we intend to provide supports to the non-agricultural sector, for manufacturing light equipment and as regards its marketing, necessary assistance, including loan facilities.

There have been milestone achievements in the health sector of Bangladesh. A rapid rise in chronic, non-communicable diseases, particularly among the poor, blaring those successes. Estimates suggest that NCDs- which include diabetes, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, and cancers- now account for half of all deaths each year. We need to address the policy options that could be leveraged through ensuring health equity, governance, and accountability.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is a shortage of trained teachers and facilities in Bangladesh's rural areas, making education inequitable. We need to ensure that the students across Bangladesh have access to standard education, creativity and need-based skill development which are vital for the homogeneous education system.

Bangladesh a decade back is not the same at present. Present Bangladesh is a transformed country of commitment. The labor and merit of her people, the timely policy of the government, venture and ceaseless support by the Development Partners accelerate our future endeavors. I hope and do firmly believe that our development partners and bilateral donor countries with contributing more towards our ambitious journey as they did before, which will eventually be counted in achieving a 'Golden Bangladesh' as dreamed of by our Father of the Nation.

Keeping this in mind and wishing all-out success of the Bangladesh Development Forum 2020, I pronounce its grand inauguration. Thank you all once again.

Khoda Hafez.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.