

Bangladesh Development Forum 2018

Speech by

HE Sheikh Hasina

Hon'ble Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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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 in the inaugural session of Bangladesh Development Forum 2018.

I pay my deep homage to the memory of the greatest Bangali of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the beginning of the speech. I pay my deep respect to four national leaders, 3 million martyrs and 2 lakh women, who lost their innocence, in the war of liberation.

Bangladesh has been able to achieve remarkable success in various fields of socio-economic development. Our all-out efforts for sustainable economic and social development have been continuing. As a result of our government's development policy, action plan and proper implementation of it, Bangladesh has become recognized as a role model of development in the world today.

In order to upgrade Bangladesh to a developed and prosperous country by 2041, we have to achieve the target of our five-year plan, Vision-2021 and the United Nations-declared sustainable development goals-2030. We have been working on implementing Vision-2021. Vision 2021 aims at transforming Bangladesh into a middle-income country.

We want to implement sustainable development goals 2030 through these three five-year plans of 7th, 8th and 9th. We were preparing the 7th Five-Year Plan when the United Nations 2030 Agenda was in its initial stage. As a result, we were able to contribute in creating the world development agenda. At the same time, we were able to reflect on our national plan. Actually, the 2030 agenda is working as a directive in our national development priority selections.

We want to put forward the goals and strategies for you in implementing the agenda in this forum. We want to know your advice and opinion regarding this matter. We need cooperation from development partners, civil society, intellectual and private sectors to implement the development goals and programs. The main goal of our 7th Five-Year Plan is to ensure socio-economic development through a sustainable growth.

To ensure the supply of finance is the big challenge to achieve sustainable development goals. For this, the developed countries will have to come forward with financial and technical assistance to implement the development goals. In addition to traditional financial assistance in dealing with environmental and climate change, the international community will have to be more attentive to the world trade system, which can contribute to overall global development including poverty alleviation, employment generation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the last few years, there has been significant progress in macroeconomic management. Our government policies and programs have been proven effective in

accelerating economic growth, reducing budget deficit, high imports and exports growth, and ensuring satisfactory growth of foreign exchange reserves.

In 1991 our poverty rate was 56.7 percent and we reduced the rate of poverty to 22.4 percent. The extreme poverty rate has decreased by 7.9 percent. By 2021, the goal of bringing poverty down to 14 percent has been set in the implementation of a plan to build hunger and poverty-free Bangladesh.

Our average GDP growth rate was 6.26 percent in the last decade. In the last fiscal year, the rate has increased to 7.28 percent. At the same time, our export earnings and remittance sent from abroad have tripled the amount. Foreign exchange reserve has increased almost nine-fold. It is now over USD 33 billion.

Bangladesh is currently the 44th largest economy in the world on the basis of GDP. And its position on the basis of purchasing power is 32nd. According to international financial analysts, by 2030 and 2050, Bangladesh will become the 28th and 23rd largest economy country respectively, based on GDP and purchasing capacity.

13 million mobile SIMs are being used in Bangladesh. 8 crore people are using the internet. Digital centers have been established in each union. From there people get 200 types of services. The per capita income of the people is now USD 1,610.

Foreign investment in the current fiscal stands at USD 3 billion. Remittance comes in USD 13 billion. The electricity production is now 16,350 Mega Watt. 83 percent of the people have been come under the power facility. The average life expectancy of people has increased to 72 years.

In all our economic activities, we have emphasized on 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. Bangladesh's reputation for business-investment and communication crossed the regional boundaries.

In the development of ongoing progress, we consider private partnerships including international partner countries and organizations as important. In this context, the government has now initiated the establishment of 100 economic zones in different areas of the country for foreign direct investment, working in other infrastructure development and implementing necessary reform programs to create more foreign investment-friendly environment. In this regard, recently the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) has been formed by merging Board of Investment and Privatization Commission.

Changes in agricultural activities are necessary to adapt due to climate change. In order to prevent and reduce the risks of climate and disaster in agriculture, we have emphasized sustainable and productive farming practices.

We have taken initiatives to introduce the methods of livestock production and the modified grazing system. At the same time, we have been trying to produce climate-friendly food production systems, saline and flood tolerant crops.

We have to achieve rapid growth in investment. Increasing the productivity by geometric rates can solve the investment limitations partly. Due to proper use of education and skill, improvements in skilled workers of Bangladesh abroad will increase remittance and encourage innovative initiatives.

Bangladesh has achieved tremendous success in achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in health sector. The community clinic (CC) is an especial initiative of the current government. 18,500 community clinics and union healthcare centers have been set up across the country. This initiative has been praised by the international community as a medium to reach healthcare to the general people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The two main reasons for violence against women and children are poverty and gender discrimination. The women's empowerment has been included in the focal point of our 7th

Five-Year Plan and sustainable development goals. Bangladesh is the leading country among the developing countries to formulate gender budget.

Quick urbanization is due to socio-economic, political and demographic reasons. In order to improve sustainable transport system, rapid mass transit, elevated expressway and railway based mass transit system have been introduced with the increase of the number of big buses. Private sectors and NGOs are also encouraged to participate in housing and other services delivery such as sanitation, healthcare etc.

For the first time Bangladesh will achieve the qualification of Graduation out of LDC category at United Nations Committee for Development Policy (UNCDP)'s 3-year review meeting in March 2018. After leaving the LDCs, Bangladesh can stand beside internationally developing countries.

However, as LDC, Bangladesh is currently enjoying a number of benefits which will be discontinued after the graduation. It is possible to make up it by increasing economic mobility and work preparation. Bangladesh has taken strategic preparations to face its impact.

Bangladesh is the country of huge potentiality. We have the confidence and materials to express ourselves as a dynamic economy before the world. I hope, this meeting of Bangladesh Development Forum will play an important role in determining collective action strategies and formulating necessary recommendations for building a poverty-hunger-free and prosperous Bangladesh.

With these few words, I declare the Bangladesh Development Forum 2018 open and wish it all success.

Thank you all again.

Khoda Hafez.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Long.

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