

**World Environment Day and
National Tree Plantation Drive and Tree Fair 2012
Inaugural Ceremony**

Speech by

Sheikh Hasina

Prime Minister
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

BICC, Dhaka, Tuesday, 22 Jaistha 1419, 05 June 2012

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

The chair,
Colleagues,
H.E Michel Jarraud, Secretary General of WMO
Excellencies,
Award recipients,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamu Alaikum and very good morning to you all.

I welcome you all at the inaugural ceremony of the World Environment Day and National Tree Plantation Drive and Tree Fair 2012.

The 3-month National Tree Plantation Drive begins today with the theme: **Green Cities, Green country, Bangladesh, a country of red and green.**

Ladies and gentlemen,

The main objective of World Environment Day is to create awareness among the masses about preservation of environment. We are observing the day at national level to attain the objective. The theme of the day this year is: **Green Economy: Does it include you?**

Tree protects our environment and helps maintain our livelihood. We have taken massive programmes to plant trees on government forests, homesteads, fallow lands, and beside roads, rail-lines, river banks, newly emerged chars, khas land and various institutions.

The government has also taken extensive afforestation programme at coastal areas to face climate risks and preserve environment. As a result about 1200 square kilometre area was added to the mainland of Bangladesh. We have prepared an afforestation and sustainable livelihood model at Char Kukrimukri.

Our Community Based Adaptation to Climate Change through Coastal Afforestation in Bangladesh project received UNDP award. The co-management committee of Chunoti Sanctuary in Chittagong recently received UN Equator Award.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have built 15 national parks and wild sanctuaries. We also introduced Bangabandhu Award for Wild Life Conservation to encourage individual initiatives alongside the government ones to protect wild life. 12 thousand acres of land which have been disputed for 50 years declared as reserve forest. The reserve forest area has been raised to 1.8 percent. Three separate areas in the Sunderbans have been declared as sanctuaries for Dolphins.

We have signed two MoUs with India to protect tigers and ecosystem of the Sundarbans. A project titled Strengthening Regional Cooperation for Wildlife Protection has been undertaken

along with India, Nepal and Bhutan to protect bio-diversity as part of regional cooperation. We ratified the Nagoya protocol to utilise genetic resources.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The social afforestation programme has turned the entire country into a green habitat. It has immensely been contributing in reducing poverty. A profit of 178 crore taka of social afforestation programme has so far been distributed among 1 lakh 2 thousand beneficiaries.

The production of saplings has also been doubled since our government took office. The number of saplings raised before 2009 was less than 4 crore. In 2011, nearly 10 crore saplings were produced at government and private initiatives.

Bangladesh is the largest delta of the world having rich bio-diversity. Its people have a close relationship with the nature. But the rich bio-diversity is marred by high population growth, wanton felling of trees and hill-cutting, filling of wetlands, reduction of river navigability, and use of high doses of chemical fertiliser and insecticide in agriculture. The present government has undertaken various programmes including creating forests, river dredging and use of optimum fertiliser, for preserving the forests and bio-diversity.

We have amended the Bangladesh Environment Preservation Act, 1995 restricting hill-cutting, filling of water bodies, and production, import, stockpiling and transportation of harmful wastes. Bangladesh Environment Court Act 2010 has been enacted having provision of establishing Environment Court and Special Magistrate Court in each district. Import of harmful wastes was banned in the Import Policy so that the country does not turn into a dumping ground.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The main objective our Vision 2021 is to build a Bangladesh having Green Economy that will preserve and protect environment i.e. build a country free from pollution.

Green Growth and Green Economy require Green Energy. That is why; the government has framed renewable energy policy. Measures have been taken giving priority to fuel-saving. The government has also given special priority to Clean Development Mechanism.

We have constituted Climate Change Trust Fund to face the climate change induced disaster. A total of 2100 crore taka was allocated for the fund during the last three years. Bangladesh Climate Change Resilient Fund was formed with the assistance of the donors.

Setting up of ETP at factories is not enough to prevent industrial pollution. I would like to urge the entrepreneurs to introduce resource-saving technology and go for zero-waste producing method in phases.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have to give attention in using surface water reducing dependence on underground water. We have taken massive dredging programme to increase the navigability of rivers.

The government in collaboration with the World Bank is implementing a project titled Clean Air and Sustainable Environment to control air pollution. The government is also encouraging use of alternate building materials along with introduction of pollution free high-tech brick kiln.

We have taken various measures to make the movement of people easy, safe, healthy and environment-friendly.

Dear guests,

The government has arranged tree fair at every division, district and upazila. I urged all to collect at least two saplings, plant those and nurture those. Let us contribute for a bright future for our next generations.

I also urge all to plant rare, near-extinct and endangered varieties of trees along with medicinal, timber and fruit trees.

I congratulate the recipients of Bangabandhu Award for Wild Life Conservation and Prime Minister's award for tree plantation. I also congratulate those who got cheques for the shares of the profit in social afforestation programme. I hope that responding to the government initiative, more people will come forward in protecting environment and wild life, and plantation of trees.

Wishing a grand success of all programmes undertaken marking the World Environment Day and Tree Plantation Drive 2012, I declare the 3-day Environment Fair and three-month National Tree Plantation Drive open.

I thank you all again.

Khoda Hafez
Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.

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