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Bangladesh has been playing an important role in UN peace keeping operations. On 31 December 1999 Bangladesh got recognition as the second largest country in the field of peace keeping. Bangladesh security personnel are now engaged in peace keeping operations in 10 out of 17 trouble-torn countries of the World. These achievements and success of Bangladesh UN peace-keepers earned prestigious position for the country.

#### Bangladesh India Friendship Treaty not renewed:

Awami League was committed not to renew the Indo-Bangladesh Friendship treaty. In 1972 this treaty was necessary for ensuring security and protecting independence and sovereignty of the country. False and twisted interpretation of the treaty was given. But no past government uttered a single word in favour of repealing the treaty. After being ousted form power BNP started misleading propaganda. Awami League replied to the criticism by not renewing the friendship treaty.

#### UNESCO Peace Prize

The basic objective of Bangladesh foreign policy is establishment of peace. Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman told the UN General Assembly on 25 September 1974 that Bangladesh was fighting for the cause of peace and justice. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina after assuming power pledged full support to the UN peace keeping role. In continuity of past policy the Prime Minister succeeded in signing the historic CHT Peace treaty on 2 December 1997. This treaty ended the decades-old enmity and tension in the region. In recognition of Sheikh Hasina's contribution in bringing about peace, UNESCO peace prize was awarded to her in 1998. This is a memorable achievement for the country and for the government. The Prize was handed over to the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris on 24 September, 1998.

#### CHT Peace Treaty:

The cases of violence and bloodshed in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) were increasing due to wrong policies pursued by the post-1975 governments. As a result the people of the country were being deprived of the benefits of the huge natural and mineral resources of the area. In this backdrop, the present government after assumption of office took effective steps to solve the crisis. With this end in view a 12 member national committee comprising Parliament members from both the treasury and opposition benches was constituted headed by the Chief Whip Abul Hasnat Abdulla. The national committee after long dialogue with the PCSS signed the long cherished peace treaty on December 1997 for the permanent solution of the problem. The treaty signed within the purview of the constitution affirmed full faith and confidence in the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bangladesh and aimed at ensuring the political, social, cultural, industrial and economic rights of all the inhabitants of the CHT, accelerating socio-economic development of the region and upholding the rights of the people. Under the treaty, Shantibari first surrendered arms on 10 February 1998. The government has undertaken a Tk 2200 crore project for development of CHT. A new ministry of CHT affairs has been formed. The Regional Council started functioning under the leadership of Shantu Larma.

#### Water Sharing Treaty:

The BNP government tried but failed to bring the legitimate share of the Ganges water. Bangabandhu through dialogue with India managed 44,000 cusecs of water for Bangladesh. Ziaur Rahman could bring 34,000 cusecs and Gen Erashad could manage only 20,000 cusecs. During the period of Khaleeda Zia it came down to only 9,000 cusecs.

Bangladesh Awami League through bilateral dialogue with India signed the Water Sharing treaty and reached a just solution of the problem. The historic 30-year treaty was signed on 12 December, 1996 after fruitful talks between the Prime Ministers of Bangladesh and India. In the backdrop of the treaty, the ministerial level Joint River Commission has been reactivated. In the 32nd meeting of the commission, it was decided to set up links between the dams within respective boundary of India and Bangladesh in lean period. These links would save the people living in west bank of the Teesta from recurring floods.

#### The Policy of National Consensus:

As stated in the election manifesto, steps have been taken to implement the policy of national Consensus for development and reconstruction. Though emerged as the majority party in election, Awami league did not form a single party government. Offer was given to BNP for joining the government but it did not.

#### Constitution of Parliamentary Committees

# Government in the National and International Level

The present Government has been striving to institutionalize democracy and make parliament the centre of all nation building activities. The government has provided for parliamentary standing committees to be headed by MPs instead of ministers. Even an opposition MP may now heads a committee. Parliamentary debates are now broadcast over radio and TV to give the people an access to the debates. The Prime Minister's question-answer time has been introduced in parliament for the first time in our history to ensure accountability.

#### The Judiciary

The Government has been working for separation of judiciary from the executive with a view to ensuring full independence of judiciary. Under the present government headed by Sheikh Hasina, country's judiciary enjoys full independence. The parliament has repealed the infamous Indemnity Ordinance which was promulgated in 1975 in violation of fundamental and human rights. This has made the trial of the killers of Bangabandhu, his family members and four national leaders killed in jail, possible. By repealing the Indemnity Ordinance, the sacred constitution achieved at the cost of the blood of 3 million martyrs, has been restored to its original glory. The judgement of Bangabandhu killing has been announced and an appeal against the judgement is pending before the higher court. The present government is not in favour of interfering with the judiciary. Trial of the killers of four national leaders in jail, killing of General Zia, and General Manjoor is in progress.

The government has undertaken a three year project called "Judicial and legal capacity building" with the objective of improvement of socio-economic condition, reform of legal system, modernization and development of physical infrastructure of courts.

The government for the first time constituted Legal Aids Committee, headed by District Judges in 61 Districts to provide legal assistance to the poor and destitute. These district level committees have been working under the National Legal Aid Committee. The government is committed to protect human rights. In the meantime a neutral National Human Rights Commission has been formed. The government has set up the Judicial Administration Training Institute to enhance the skill of concern professional personnel. The government has formed a permanent Law Commission headed by a retired Chief Justice of Supreme Court to make the laws up to date through necessary reforms. This Commission has already undertaken measures to make some new laws and reframe the old ones. Considering the increasing number of pending cases in courts the government has decided to set up village courts for settling litigation's through negotiation and mutual understanding. The decision of setting up of village courts in line with local tradition, has been considered timely. The Public Safety Act has been passed for taking quick action against the persons creating violence and law and order situation. Special court has been set up for the trial of terrorists. In the meantime, the terrorists in the South West region have surrendered en masse and programme for their trial and rehabilitation is in progress.

#### Administrative system

The government has established rule of law for ensuring transparency and accountability of the Government. Administration has been kept beyond party influence. Necessary laws have been made and in some cases applied to, for developing a skilled administrative system, free from corruption. An Administrative Reforms Commission has been formed. The Commission has already completed its report.

#### Local Government bodies election

Soon after assuming office, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina constituted a high-power local government commission to put forward recommendations on framing a welfare-oriented local government system. As per recommendations of the local government Commission the government has already taken steps to install a 4-tier local government structure. Local government would be installed at village, union, upazila and district levels. This recommendation has already been approved by the parliament and council of ministers. Parliament has passed the Village Council Act. Through amendment to the Union Council Act, for every three wards one seat has been kept reserved for women. The Union Parishad comprises of 9 wards. Besides the women are also allowed to contest for the general seats. This has opened up

in memory of the Shaheed intellectuals.

#### Economic growth

The GDP growth rate is a dependable index of economic development. During 1999-2000 fiscal year growth rate was 5.5 percent (new index). The country's GDP growth achieved during the past four years surpassed all previous records. The election manifesto of Bangladesh Awami League in 1996 pledged to give subsidy in agriculture sector if necessary. As per this commitment Tk. 411 crore has been provided as subsidy. The previous government had given Tk. 100 crore as subsidy for fertilizer and energy.

#### Agricultural Development

Revolutionary change has come in the field of extending agricultural loan. During 98-99 fiscal year Tk 2005 crore have been disbursed as agricultural loan. Never before in the history of Bangladesh such a big amount was granted as agricultural loan from banking sector.

#### Youth Development

The recent achievement in the field of international sports is glorious Bangladesh won 21 gold, 9 silver and 6 bronze medals in special Olympic in July 1999 in America. Bangladesh became champion in youth cricket in July 1999 in Singapore. The Bangladesh cricket team is now



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Old Age Pension distribution function in Tungipara.

hundred taka per month under this scheme. From 1999-2000 fiscal year a scheme for giving allowance to the widows and women deserted by husband has been introduced. Under this scheme two Lac women are getting government allowance. For the rehabilitation of retarded persons the national foundation for the retarded has been set up with ten crore taka as initial grant. Santi Nibas, another center for aged persons has been set up at a cost of taka ten crore.

The Chittagong station of BTV was inaugurated within 6 months of assumption of office by the present government. Four TV relay centers were opened in less than two years time at Patuakhali, Thakurgaon, Brahmanbaria and Jhenidah. TV relay centers are also being set up at Rajshahi, Ukha and Rangamati.

For ensuring free flow of information and accountability of the administration, the government at the directive of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has taken initiative to allow channels of the electronic media under private sector and such permission has already been granted. This will

create environment of healthy competition between government and private electronic media.

This bold and timely step by the government would have favorable impact on democratic practice. At present, there is no newspaper under government ownership.

The present government has

announced and implemented the 5th wage board award for the benefit of working journalists and press workers.

Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman constituted the first wage board in 1974 and implemented its recommendations.

The present government believes in full freedom of press.

The newspapers publishing news and views in a fair and free atmosphere and enjoys full freedom.

The government has increased the rate of advertisement and ensured fair distribution for flourishing newspaper industry.

#### Monument of Independence

The present govt. has taken various measures to protect and preserve the memorials of liberation war.

Initiative has been taken by the government to build an independence square and a

monument at Suhrabandi udyan

where Bangabandhu delivered his

historic address on 7 March, 1971

and subsequently Pakistani Army

surrendered on 16 December same

year. The government has installed

the "Eternal Flame" on the golden

jubilee year of Independence and

built a monument at Rayer Bazar

in memory of the Shaheed

intellectuals.

#### Poverty Alleviation

The present government has given

top priority to poverty alleviation

which was reflected in the budget

allocations during the past four

years. For poverty alleviation Tk.

5313.42 crore was allocated in

ADP for year 99-2000.

In the proposed budget for year 2000-2001, ADP allocation has been raised to 6006.1 crore. The expenditure for poverty alleviation has been increased by 13 percent.

#### Tele-communication

The importance of Tele-communication is immense in the backdrop of globalization. After assuming office the present government has taken initiative to expand tele-communication network both under public and private sectors. At present Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board has 4.91 lakh telephone connection this number will be raised to 8 lakh by the end of coming fiscal year. In the meantime, five private sector companies have given 1.5 lakh new telephone connections. More private companies have been given license for giving telephone connection. By the end of year 2001, number of telephone connections in public and private sector would be 12 Lac.

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efforts of the whole nation any problem may be resolved, even if the problem is gigantic.

Now the nation is marching towards the 21st century under the able and dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. World leaders and donor countries are all-praise about the government of Sheikh Hasina indicating that Bangladesh has a bright and prosperous future.

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## Prosperity for Bangladesh

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quantities of fruits, vegetables and other agro-based items.

Although the number of people below the poverty line is still very large it is decreasing, albeit slowly. In the last four years the incidence of poverty has declined from 47% to 44.7%. Social indicators have registered significant improvements:

- \* Adult literacy rate has increased from 44 percent in 1996 to 60 percent in 2000.
- \* Gross enrolment in primary Schools is 97 percent
- \* 65 percent of the enrolled primary School students successfully complete their education and the ratio is rising.
- \* Average life expectancy has increased from 58.9 years in 1996 to 60.8 years in 2000.
- \* Child mortality rate has declined from 67 per thousand to 57 in four years.
- \* Daily per capita calorie intake has increased from 2216 kilo calorie in 1996 to 2283 kilo calorie in April 1999.

In order to provide a safety net to those who are unable to join the mainstream of development, Sheikh Hasina's Government has introduced a scheme for providing an allowance to those who are both very old and very poor. Nearly half a million people have been getting this allowance since 1998. Another scheme has been introduced to provide an allowance to poor women with dependent children who are either widows or abandoned by their husbands. These are perhaps the first attempts in South Asia to build a social safety net for the poor and the old. A housing scheme for the homeless is being implemented under the direct supervision and patronage of the Prime Minister. A highly concessional housing loan

program for the rural poor is being implemented by the Government through NGOs. Over four million households benefited from a very successful "vulnerable group feeding" program in the rural areas of the country. The micro-credit program, implemented both by government agencies and non-governmental organizations, is also making a contribution in the nation's campaign against poverty. In the 1999-2000 financial year, different government agencies disbursed Tk 20350 million as micro credit. The NGOs disbursed Tk 77350 million to a total of 8.70 million rural poor, mostly women. Bangladesh is not only a pioneer in micro-finance but a leader in using and refining these innovative credit programs.

The rates of savings and investment in Bangladesh have been rising steadily. Domestic saving as a percentage of GDP has increased from 13.13 percent in 1995 to 17.78 percent in 1999. The rate of investment as a percentage of GDP increased from 19.12 percent in 1995 to 22.41 percent in 1999. The increase in saving and investment rate is reflected in both industrial production and exports. At the beginning of the decade Bangladesh exports amounted to \$1.52 billion; by 1998-99 the country's exports had risen to \$5.32 billion. Exports are currently growing at an annual rate of about 7 percent. Within a relatively short period of a decade and a half Bangladesh has become a major supplier of ready-made garments and knitwear to the North American and European markets. In addition to the incentives given to export industries, the Export Processing Zones in Dhaka and Chittagong have also been given special facilities to encourage both domestic and foreign exporters.

The Industrial policy recently announced by the government guarantees foreign investors the right to repatriate their profits and capital. Foreign investors can fully own the industries they set up; they can also buy land to build their industries. Tax holidays and other generous tax incentives mark Bangladesh as one of the most attractive investment destinations in Asia. A private EPZ, sponsored by Korean entrepreneurs, is being developed near Chittagong. A major United States company has entered into contract with the authorities to build two power stations to supply 800 megawatts of electricity. Other foreign firms have joined the Bangladesh Power Development Board in meeting the growing power needs of the

country.

Developments in the gas and oil sectors since Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina assumed power in June 1996 have been most dramatic. A number of large and highly productive gas fields have been discovered changing the outlook for the country's future prospects. Renowned international companies such as Shell, Chevron and Unocal are exploring for gas and oil in a number of blocks earmarked for them. Some companies have already started to sell gas to domestic buyers. Discussions are now in progress on the possibilities of gas exports. Decisions on this question can be taken once the authorities are able to firm up the estimates of reserves. Foreign investment in these and other sectors is increasing. According to a World Bank estimate, foreign investment in 1998-99 stood at \$800 million, a significant increase from the \$281 million of 1996. Human resources are the most important assets of Bangladesh. The phenomenal growth of the ready-made sector was possible largely due to the availability of a skillful and hardworking labour force. These individuals work equally hard when they go abroad, and have built up a reputation for competence, intelligence and dedication. Bangladesh receives a substantial sum in foreign exchange from expatriates living in the UK, USA and a number of Middle Eastern and South East Asian countries. In 1990 they sent home \$ 764 million and by 1998-99 remittance receipts had grown to \$ 1.7 billion. The growth rate of remittances this year is about 12 percent. The Bangladeshi government, in its recent budget for 2000-2001, has earmarked for education a sum of Taka 55960 million the highest allocation in the budget. Similarly, the allocation for health and family welfare as well that for rural infrastructure reflects the high priority attached by the government of Sheikh Hasina to the social sector. A series of steps have been taken by the government to encourage the rapid development of Information Technology in the country. The import of computers was made duty free in 1996. Facilities for computer education are being rapidly expanded in order to build the software export industry, which has already made in modest beginning.

The developments listed above have been achieved in a stable macroeconomic environment. Careful management of monetary and fiscal policies as well as a flexible exchange rate policy has kept the rate of inflation low. Currently, inflation on a point to point basis is 3.09 percent. Reserves of foreign exchange remain stable at about \$1.5 billion, which is roughly equal to two month's imports. Eschewing grandiose plans such as nuclear weapons development by India and Pakistan, Bangladesh has consistently followed a balanced and responsible foreign policy dedicated to regional and global peace. When India and Pakistan exploded nuclear weapons and regional peace and security were at risk, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina traveled to Delhi and Islamabad to counsel patience and restraint. The UNESCO peace prize awarded to Sheikh Hasina was a fitting tribute to a leader who has made significant contributions to promoting peace and stability both at home and abroad. The international community paid another tribute to Bangladesh when UNESCO declared 21 February as the International Mother Language Day. It was on this day in 1952 when Bangalee youths sacrificed their lives to uphold the dignity and status of their mother language, Bengali. Yet another laurel earned by Sheikh Hasina was the Ceres prize awarded by FAO for success in achieving outstanding success in the field of food production. Last year the international community expressed its confidence in Bangladesh when 172 member states of the United Nations unanimously voted to elect Bangladesh as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. Soldiers of the Bangladesh armed forces are serving with distinction in various UN Peacekeeping missions around the world.

Bangladesh today stands at the threshold of rapid economic and social development. Structural reforms achieved in the past four years have placed the economy in a sound position to benefit from the process of economic globalization. This stable, liberal and democratic country, free of domestic conflict or external tensions, certainly warrants a second look from potential foreign investors. The growing confidence and breadth of private domestic investment certainly provides some indication of the country's economic potential. Buoyed by the prospect of significant natural gas resources, and with a growing appreciation of the wealth of its human capital