

# Full text of prime minister's broadcast speech

BSS, Dhaka

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

## My dear countrymen,

Assalamu Alaikum.

Today marks the completion of three years of the BNP-led 4- party alliance government. The democratic government elected by you is stepping into its fourth year. Please accept my best wishes on this occasion. You reposed the responsibility of running the country on us three years ago by staging a silent revolution of ballots. I recall that episode here with gratitude. I am also grateful to you for the silent support that you extended all along to us as well as your vocal support in times of need. Today, I would humbly request you to recall the circumstances at the time when we formed the government. At that juncture, we had identified two major problems. First, a disastrous economic condition; there was then an acute shortage of foreign currency and the country was heavily burdened with debt. Second, a frightening situation was prevailing in the country due to horrific terrorism of political nature backed by the ruling coterie. We pledged to free the country from those two menaces. Two new hazards made their appearance in the third year of our governance. One, natural disaster. Two, manmade disaster. In this backdrop, I have come to tell you face to face on the occasion of third anniversary of the alliance government, how we tackled these adversities and what we intend to do during the next two years. I would like to tell you at the very outset about the adverse natural condition.

As you know, the country was ravaged this time by a devastating flood. A large area of the country including greater Sylhet was submerged twice in succession by floodwaters. Not only the rural areas, the urban townships also went down. The height of water was also higher than any previous floods. This severe flood caused much harm to our public life and agro-based economy. There were large-scale damages to agricultural crops, livestock, poultry, residential houses, roads-ports, bridges-culverts. The educational institutions and industrial establishments also suffered losses. Many people had to endure indescribable hardships and sufferings. Even the calculations of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank points to a loss of over Taka 13 thousand crore due to this year's flooding. The loss is, however, much higher according to our own estimate.

## My dear brothers and sisters,

You have seen, we started a huge relief and rescue operation at the very onset of floods. I stood beside you at that distressful moment. Shelter camps were swiftly opened for the flood-affected people. We distributed necessary relief materials including food, baby-food, pure water, clothing and medicine to the best of our ability. The security arrangements were also strengthened. As a consequence, the loss of lives was much less by the grace of Allah. There was no outbreak of diseases in epidemic form, as in the past. It was possible to check anomalies in distribution of relief materials. I extend my thanks to all those who participated in relief and rescue efforts, including the civil administration, the armed forces, peoples' representatives and NGOs. I felicitate you, dear countrymen, for your patience, courage, discipline and mental strength. I never saw your faces becoming pale even in the midst of a disaster. You did not break down. This steadfastness provided us with vigour and encouragement.

By the grace of Allah, we tackled the disaster successfully. Our effort was lauded both at the national and international levels. We shall have to take well-planned initiatives at the national level and coordinated measures at the regional level for reducing the risks and losses from this kind of flood in future. International assistance would be required for this. We held a national workshop immediately after the floods with that objective in mind. By the grace of Allah, we shall adopt realistic policies and strategies after reviewing its recommendations. You have seen, we did not accept any foreign assistance for tackling floods this year. We undertook relief efforts with our own resources. We declared that assistance to the distressed people, who incurred losses, would continue until the new harvest is at hand. But, we sought foreign assistance and help for post-flood works. That process has already started with the help rendered by the United Nations. But we should not sit idle with the expectation of that aid.

We have started the rehabilitation programme in accordance with our ability immediately after the recession of flood-waters. 26 lakh small and marginal farmers are being provided with 25 kg fertilisers each and various types of seeds including that of rice. Saplings are also being distributed among them. Those who suffered losses are also being given utensils and cash assistance for construction of their houses. The relevant ministries have been allocated Taka 1245 crore for the repair of infrastructure damaged by flood. Necessary initiative has been taken for completing these tasks as soon as possible. An amount of Taka 96 crore has already been disbursed for agricultural rehabilitation. More money would be sanctioned in phases. The time-limit for repayment of agricultural credit has been deferred by one year because of the flood.

The farmers need not repay their debt during the current year. The target for the disbursement of agricultural credit has been raised to Taka 5000 crore. Last year, the amount disbursed was Taka 3,700 crore. This time, the disbursement target has been increased by 50 percent. How have we been able to accomplish these tasks with our own resources? This success was possible not that of the government alone. This success belongs to you all, the whole nation.

## Struggling countrymen,

A new kind of natural disaster struck us just as we were recovering from the ravages of flood. Breaking the climatic pattern, there were heavy downpours throughout the country during Bhadra-Ashwin. Overall losses increased manifold due to this incessant rain. The sorrows and hardships of the people became almost unbearable. Not only in the villages, the torrential rains resulted in floods even in the cities. It resulted in water-logging on a large-scale. Such continuous rain had never taken place in the country during the past fifty years. In metropolis Dhaka, there were 341 millimeters of rain in 24 hours. It is now a record. There were incessant rains even last week. Arranged to be there horrendous tommoes at various regions of the country. Not only in Bangladesh, similar problems emerge even in developed countries of the world due to heavy rain. But they overcome the problem very swiftly. But water in our country is of such huge magnitude that there is no arrangement for quick drainage. The wetlands and canals of Dhaka have been filled up long time ago. The water gets blocked in alleyways and roads as a result. The ground floors of residential houses were flooded. Water, gas, electricity supply and telephone connections were disrupted. Huge problems were faced in moving around. The roads and other infrastructures of the towns suffered serious damage due to floods and rains this year. Consequently, the amount of damage due to simultaneous floods and rains is much higher compared to mere floods in the past. Much of the work that was going on to beautify the city of Dhaka has been spoiled. We are trying our best to minimise the hardships of the city-dwellers at this hour.

But you certainly realise how acute the problems created by rains become because of unplanned urbanisation. The mobility of our economy and development has been halted to some extent due to the onslaught of two consecutive natural disasters. We have asked for swift international assistance to overcome the losses. All kinds of assistance are immediately required at this very hour for rehabilitation of the distressed people and swift reconstruction of infrastructure.

We want to say, combating the floods and post-flood situation should be the number one programme of us all. We are doing just that. The history of human civilisation is a history of triumph over hostile nature. I am certain that with the cooperation of you all and by the grace of Allah, we shall emerge victorious in this struggle to erase the wounds of natural disaster.

## Peace-loving countrymen,

Let us now consider what the government has done or is doing to eliminate terrorism, which is another curse in our national life. You know about two forms of terrorism. One, terrorism backed by the ruling party as in the past. Two, Social terrorism as a consequence of clash of individual and group interests. We took a firm stand against terrorism since assumption of office. As a result, the pleasure- grounds of killings and terrorism that were created under political leaderships at various places of the country including Dhaka, Narayanganj, Feni, Barisal, Luxmipur and Mymensingh were brought to an end. We took a strong initiative to stop extortion. The situation has improved a lot as a result. But, complete success is still eluding us. Silent extortions still take place in the name of various parties and organisations. We shall take stricter measures in this area. Alongside combating political terrorism, we have taken various steps for the elimination of social terrorism. The top terrorists have been identified. Operation Clean Heart was conducted. Speedy trial law and tribunals have been instituted. Sensational cases are being supervised by the Home Ministry. The criminals are now being punished. Maximum penalty is being handed down for most serious crimes. RAB has been set up. RAB is conducting a courageous and non-partisan campaign for curbing terrorism. The people are breathing a sigh of relief because of the successes they already achieved. The forces involved in maintaining law and order, including the police, have been further activated. They are doing their job efficiently. The rate of terrorism has reduced a lot as a result of these initiatives taken by the government. Fear is now lurking in the minds of the criminals. Many of the top terrorists have now fled to other countries.

## Conscious countrymen,

Social stability and peace in the country could be ensured to a large extent because of these successes of your government. Local and foreign investments have been encouraged. Renowned industrial groups from abroad

showed interest and came forward for investing in this country. But it is a matter of great sadness that political terrorism has suddenly returned in a different shape. We now have to confront this man-made disaster alongside natural disaster. As you know, many innocent people were killed in the past due to explosion of bombs at various public meetings and habitats of this country. Not a single such incident could be unraveled through investigations at that time. This bombing had stopped after the arrival of our government. But it is unfortunate that bomb attacks and sabotage have been restarted in recent times. Bombs are being placed at many places. Losses and damages could, however, be avoided through timely recovery and deactivation of many of these. I thank the bomb and explosive disposal units for this courageous work. They are doing this job by risking their own lives. But many people have already been killed or injured due to bomb attacks at various places of the country. One foreign diplomat was also injured. We are trying to unravel the mystery behind these bomb attacks. Another incident of horrific attack has occurred in the meantime. This attack has shaken the very foundation of stability and peace in our national life. Twenty two people including front-ranking leader Ivy Rahman lost their lives due to a grenade explosion at an Awami League rally on 21 August. Many others were seriously injured or incapacitated. We are amazed, shocked and saddened by this incident alongside the whole nation. There was a temporary disruption in our post-flood rehabilitation programme because of this incident and the organised violent reactions in its aftermath. Finding out the perpetrators became our main goal after that. But the objective of some parties was to bring the country to a standstill. They launched emotional and unjustified programmes with that objective. Fortunately, we have been able to tackle those programmes with the support of the countrymen. The country has remained functional. I express my condolences again for those who were killed in the 21 August incident including Ivy Rahman. I extend my sympathy to the members of their families. My sincerest sympathy are for those who were injured. I also express my deep sorrow for railway guard Humayun Kabir who was burnt and killed while on duty when a train was set on fire as a violent reaction to the incident. Side by side with this brave, dutiful and devoted man keen to safeguard state property, I also recall the murder of ten passengers including women and children on a state-owned double-decker bus in Dhaka on an evening preceding a hartal. I express my grief for those unfortunate passengers as well. After these tragic deaths in political violence, I am compelled to ask the question: when politics is supposed to be for people's welfare, why is it giving rise to unnatural deaths? Why is politics being used for damaging state-owned and private properties? You must be feeling in the depths of your hearts, how appalling, sad and tragic this politics is and how difficult it is for a family to recover from such mishaps. You are aware, this poisonous politics can push the country to utter darkness! We have been striving sincerely to confront this politics of darkness, this politics of destruction with all our might. And we seek you by our side in this combat. Create mass awareness against the politics of violence. Put people's pressure on all parties for transition to an illumined politics.

## Democracy-loving countrymen,

Wanted to meet the leader of the opposition immediately after the lamentable incident of 21 August. But she did not agree. Even then, I went to the hospital to see the injured including Ivy Rahman. I also conveyed my sympathy and feelings by writing to the leader of the opposition. I sought her help to stop such terrorism. She rejected everything. She wants the resignation of the government before anything else. This she has been seeking ever since the election of October 2001. But why? Is it for another election? What if her party is beaten in the next election as well? Then what would happen? Would they again resort to movement, people's wall, hartals, blockades for yet another election? Would they again announce another deadline like 30 April for bringing down the government?

This 30 April deadline has been identified as an infamous chapter in the history of democratic politics of this country. They set 30 April as the date for toppling your elected government through a mysterious trump card. That 30 April came. It also went away. The government has remained at its allotted place. But they have not yet clarified to the countrymen about the mystery of the trump card. Not on the basis of votes or voters, they wanted to go to power through a declaration of deadline and trump card. Would the country's politics continue to evolve with only one objective like this, to bring a particular party to power? Is politics synonymous with gambling? If they think so, then I would like to declare in unequivocal terms, your dream of going to power would be reduced to dust just like the house of cards. I have a fervent request for them, leave the politics of gambling, pick up the politics of ballots. We have all adopted the ideals of democracy as the mode of running statecraft in Bangladesh. This ideal has given rise to four distinct borderlines: One, there would be a parliamentary form of government. Two, General election would be held under a caretaker government for forming that government. Three, national parliamentary election would be held in a free and fair manner bereft of party influence. And Four, completion of five-year term by the government with majority support in parliament has to be ensured. The countrymen reposed the responsibility of running the affairs of government to the party of their choice through election on the basis of these four established norms. But, it is now being observed that a party does not want to give the opportunity of assuming office to any other party except itself. They are resorting to violence in the name of movement to materialise this illogical demand. The parliament is the life-blood of parliamentary democracy. We have taken the initiative to make this parliament a focal point for taking all important decisions of the state. You have seen, many laws have been passed in this parliament for the sake of the people during the past three years. Discussions and lively debates have taken place on many important subjects. Many significant decisions have been taken. But the main opposition party has kept itself outside this parliamentary process most of the time. They resorted to walk-outs on unjustified grounds. They boycotted parliament for trivial reasons. They tried to immobilise the parliament through anarchy and unparliamentary behaviour. Above all, they are repeatedly issuing threats of bringing towns, ports and public life to a halt. They are calling for changing the government forcibly through unconstitutional means. The countrymen have given the responsibility of running the government to the alliance led by BNP by making them victorious in over two-thirds of seats. We shall discharge that responsibility. We cannot dishonour the people of this country; we cannot deny their preference, ignore their opinion. We undertook the responsibility of government after taking oath for upholding the Constitution. We must continue to discharge that responsibility. We cannot allow the rules of running the country to be trampled under vandalism, riots and application of force on the streets. We cannot give up our hard-earned democracy and the four distinct foundations on which it is built. I want to know, basing on the movements and threats that have been going on from the very first day by ignoring the verdict of the people, what kind of democratic behaviour are these? Political terrorism emerges from the midst of this undemocratic behaviour. The bus passengers are dying in fire. The railway guard is burnt to death. The audience is dying due to bombs and grenades at public meetings. People's vehicles, shops are being smashed. There is no alternative to tackle this kind of activities with a firm hand for the sake of people's security. No civilised country can give an open license to anarchy, terrorism and destruction of property in the name of politics. The main principle of a successful democracy is the coexistence of rights and responsibilities. Democracy gives rights to people. But people have to be responsible while enjoying their rights in a democracy. The rights evaporate if that sense of responsibility is missing. Democracy also perishes.

So I call upon all to adhere to democratic norms, especially to become responsible citizens. In this context, I want to say very clearly, we would not tolerate any kind of terrorism on our soil, be it in the name of politics, religion, ideals or social revolution. We would not shirk from framing more stringent laws similar to other developed democratic countries of the world for eliminating terrorism and ensure peace and security of public life.

## Conscientious countrymen,

The criminals who were responsible for the 21 August incident must be found out so that such incidents do not occur again. All possible measures have been taken by the government in this direction. A judicial enquiry commission was constituted and the commission has already submitted its report. The international investigation agency 'Interpol' was brought to the country. Representatives of the American intelligence agency FBI also came. The local investigating and intelligence agencies are also keeping up their efforts to solve the mystery.

It is unfortunate that vile attempts are being made to belittle various individuals and institutions by relating them to this incident. A quarter is raising various questions by implicating Bangladesh Army. They want to weaken the security system in the country by generating controversy. I call upon all to desist from the evil attempts at making the armed forces controversial. In this regard, I would request you to consider one aspect sympathetically. The task of identifying criminals and terrorists is expensive, laborious and time consuming. It becomes difficult to find out the criminals if required assistance cannot be obtained. Besides, you all know that our resources are limited, so there is a dearth of equipments for investigation as well as skilled manpower. Even then, we are conducting all-out investigation. It is the responsibility of all to render assistance in this investigation. Especially, the people who were present during the incident can offer maximum help by providing information. I am urging them again to do that. A reward of Taka 1 crore has already been announced for providing information on the criminals. I call upon the opposition political party, let us not use this unfortunate incident as a political tool, instead, let us engage ourselves in checking its repetition and in finding out the perpetrators. Let us find the highway for emerging out of the alleyway of terrorism.

## Friendship-seeking countrymen,

Let me now say a few words about our foreign policy. The Muslim countries of the world have attracted special attention of the West after nine-eleven. We have emerged victorious in this challenge despite being a large Muslim country. The people of Bangladesh did not resort to angry protests despite

the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The peace-loving people of Bangladesh expressed their desire for peace in Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq peacefully. Responsible leaders of America have visited Bangladesh. They have appreciated our position correctly. Bangladesh did not get involved in any international debate. We have been able to maintain friendly ties with the United States - the country which imports many of our products and gave opportunities to many Bangladeshis to live permanently.

The traditional friendship of Bangladesh with the People's Republic of China has deepened. Cooperation with Thailand and Myanmar has also been strengthened. This year, there has been a change in the central government of neighbouring India. We have established good communication with this new government of Delhi. We are hopeful, opportunities would be created for resolving the existing problems including trade imbalance between the two countries, water-sharing and border disputes on the basis of sovereign equality. We have maintained good relations with the European Union including France, Germany, United Kingdom. We have also succeeded in maintaining excellent ties with Japan and South Korea. Although the heads of governments have changed in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, their good relations with Bangladesh have remained unchanged.

Above all, our close friendships with the Muslim world and the SAARC countries including Pakistan have been consolidated.

## Development-seeking countrymen,

I have told you beforehand and you know very well, we assumed office at a time when the global situation was very adverse. That condition persists even today. Upheavals are going on throughout the world due to war, terrorism and economic recession. As a result, the flow of foreign aid to developing countries like ours has declined. The equations of international relations have also become complex. In the midst of these, we have achieved notable success and progress during the past three years by treading our path very carefully. You yourself can see the pictures of these developments. I, therefore, would not provide detailed descriptions. I would only present some important successes. First, I would speak about the economy. Our journey started with an empty treasury. We have changed that situation in three years. The economy of Bangladesh has become stable now. It now has a strong foundation. The reserve of foreign currency has now crossed the 3 billion US dollar mark. For this, I would like the especially thank our expatriate brothers and sisters, who are sending remittances home through legal channels. I know, many of you spend your days in foreign lands without your relatives and friends. But you have genuine affection for your country. Wherever you may be, I wish you all well. You would be able to comprehend the successes of these three years if you look at the economic indicators. The rate of economic growth has risen to over 5.5 percent. Per capita income has increased and currently stands at 444 US dollar. The volume of exports has risen by 16 percent. You would be happy to know that the exports during the last fiscal year was the highest ever in the history of this country - 7.6 billion US dollar. The confidence of foreigners on us has increased due to all these reasons. As a result, there has been a huge rise in foreign investment. According to the estimate of a United Nations Agency, Bangladesh has recorded the highest growth in foreign investment in South Asia. The rate of growth in this field has been 133 percent. Alongside this, we are seeking to reduce the interest rate of bank loans so that people can set up industries and do business by paying less interest on capital. A new dynamism has been visible in the industrial sector during the past three years. Compared to the import of capital machinery during the five-year rule of the previous regime, it marked an increase by 50 percent in more three years of our rule. At that time, machineries brought were worth 9,100 crore taka. And this amount rose to almost 15,000 crore taka during our 3 year rule.

I should mention one thing here. The price of some commodities has also increased in our country due to price increases in the international market. The price of petroleum oil has already doubled in the global market. Price per barrel of oil has crossed the 50 US dollar mark. This is a record for the world market in recent times. All countries of the world are facing difficulty in coping with the price rise. Fuel is needed for different purposes including transportation, irrigation and electricity generation. So, the prices of other commodities are also affected if the price of fuel rises. We have kept the price of fuel low through government subsidies, so that the poor do not suffer. Taka 1,400 crore has been kept for this assistance in the current year's budget. This assistance would now increase. I call upon all to remain vigilant so that the general masses derive benefit out of it and dishonest traders do not elicit additional profit on the pretext of rise in oil prices in the global market. My dear brothers and sisters, You have seen that huge advances have been made in the field of education, especially primary and women's education, during the past three years. All the children who are supposed to attend primary schools are getting admitted. The proportion of boys and girls are now equal there. The target for achieving this goal was 2015. But Bangladesh has achieved it a decade earlier. I thank those who are sending their children to school. Please keep in mind that they should not leave school midway through. You have seen, we have stopped copying in public examinations. The text books are being dispatched to the students on time. Upliftarian initiatives are being taken to raise the standard of education and these have started yielding results. The process has started to provide pension to the private teachers. Arrangements have been made for free education of girls up to higher secondary level and scholarships and stipends have been put in place for the meritorious. Under the 'reaching out of school children' project, 20 lakh children are being provided financial aid to complete their primary education. There is an allocation of Taka 400 crore for this 6-year project. Another educational development programme has been initiated with an outlay of Taka 5000 crore. We have adopted education and training as the principal tool for eradicating poverty and unemployment and promoting development. One thing must be mentioned here. Our educational institutions are being kept shut day after day on various pretexts. Political movement, student strike, boycott of class by teachers are the

major grounds. Our future is being spoiled through these destructive activities. I call upon all to keep our educational institutions free from hartals, strikes and class boycotts. The guardians should also be vocal about it. If we can keep the garments industry outside the purview of hartals, then why can't we keep the educational institutions outside disruptive programmes? We are all getting good results from the steps we took with your cooperation for banning harmful polythene and vehicles emitting black smoke. We shall have to take more stringent measures like these for preserving the environment. We have built, rebuilt and renovated rural roads, bridges and culverts on a massive scale during the past three years. We have solved the problem of supplying water in urban areas including the capital to a large extent. The sanitary facilities have been expanded. Elections to the local government institutions at various tiers have been held in a free, fair and peaceful atmosphere. We have made massive improvements in the country's infrastructure including those of the capital. Effective steps have been taken to reduce traffic jam and environmental pollution in capital Dhaka. The construction of flyovers at Mohakhali and Khilgaon is now in the final stage. By the grace of Allah, the Mohakhali flyover would be opened to the traffic in November. And the construction of Khilgaon flyover would also be completed soon. After that, the Jatrabari-Gulistan flyover would be built. The multi-storied car park at Motijheel is now under construction. The traffic jams in Dhaka would decline after these jobs are completed.

## My dear brothers and sisters,

Bangladesh has joined the 24-nation consortium for linking with submarine cable optical fibre network. The country would find its place in the information superhighway in July 2005 after the launching of this service. As a result, epoch-making transformations would ensue in the information and communication technology sector of the country. A total of 20,000 computers worth Taka 100 crore are being distributed among various educational institutions with the goal of spreading computer education in the country. Work is going on to set up a computer institute at Feni. Shaheed Ziaur Rahman ICT scholarship has been launched this year for the benefit of poor and meritorious students. Some positive steps have also been taken in the field of telecommunication. Charges for domestic and international calls have been reduced. Communication with the outside world from Bangladesh has been made cheaper. You can now talk to your expatriate relatives at a much reduced rate. Besides, it would soon be possible to offer T&T mobile phones to the people. The present government has undertaken massive programmes for increasing production in the agriculture sector and its overall development. The allocation for the agriculture ministry during these three years has been over 1300 crore taka. In the current budget, subsidy in the agriculture sector has been raised to Taka 600 crore. The cumulative interests on loans up to Taka 5000 have been waived for the benefit of poor farmers. Certificate cases against them have also been stopped. And I have issued directives to grant them fresh loan once they pay the first instalment of earlier loans. I have a request for the NGOs who are working with microcredit. Please consider the demand for reducing the rate of interest in the struggle for alleviating poverty.

Please follow the example of Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation and their affiliated organisations. They have lowered their highest rate of interest to 12.5 percent. We have taken the initiative to form a Labourers' Welfare Foundation for the benefit of the workers. A separate welfare fund is being set up for the transport workers. A new pay commission has started work for the government employees. They would get their salary in the new pay scale with effect from next January. They are being given 10 percent dearness allowance since last year. Their medical allowance has also been raised to Taka 400 per month. It is our government which has made arrangements for giving festival bonus to the retired government employees for the first time. Various measures taken by the government to combat women and child trafficking have been lauded by the outside world. We have invigorated the social movement against dowry. Besides, various other measures have been taken for the welfare of women, freedom fighters, workers, backward segment of the population, disabled and elderly citizens. We have further expanded the social safety net. Poverty alleviation is being accorded the highest priority in all development works. Poverty has declined as a result during these three years. The quality of life of the people has improved, their income has risen. There have been many developments in the health sector during the past three years including construction of new hospitals, increasing the number of hospital beds and ambulances, provision of medicine and medical equipment. But all our achievements would be lost if we cannot contain our population growth. So I call upon all for keeping the family small, to limit the number of children to two. Corruption is today a gigantic social malady. We have already taken the initiative to constitute an independent anti-corruption commission for eliminating corruption in the light of our election pledge along with other measures. This commission would start its journey very soon. The doors to employment generation and services have been opened up for the unemployed youth during these three years. Almost 9 lakh Bangladeshis have been provided with employment abroad through government and private initiatives. A total of 50,000 teachers have been recruited. Several doctors and nurses have found employment. Three and a half thousand new medical workers are being recruited. There have been new recruitments in the police force. Regular appointments are being made through BCS examinations. The process has already started to provide employment to 36 thousand people in vacant government jobs. Many people are also finding employment in private organisations due to the boom in trade and commerce. Many are also being provided opportunity for self-employment. This trend of jobs and employment would continue. In this context, I want to especially tell the youth community once again, you have to learn and practice the English language, otherwise you would fall behind in global competition. For the same reason, it is essential to learn how to use computers and drive motor vehicles along with using English. Alongside these, we have invigorated the movement for books and libraries, international film festivals and the practice of indigenous culture for intellectual uplift of the nation.

## My dear countrymen,

What I have said till now has not been for mere publicity of our accomplishments. The purpose has been to present the real picture of the country. You would realize from these information, development works are going on in all sectors of the country. At the same time, I would like to remind you very humbly, we have achieved these successes despite continuous movements, threats and adverse publicity outside the country by the opposition. We intend to carry forward this trend of success during the coming two years. I extend my thanks to all concerned including the officers and employees of administration for conducting all activities of the government in a proper manner and for discharging their responsibilities with dedication in the implementation of our programmes. I extend my thanks to the industrialists and business community of the country as well.

Their fifteen representative organisations have declared very boldly that they want to uphold our achievements and accomplishments. I expect similar support and cooperation from the civil society as well as our countrymen.

If your active support and cooperation continues, we would during the next two years: Expand the opportunities for education and training. Make more advances in poverty alleviation and lifting the quality of life of our people. Continue the campaign against terrorism for ensuring peace. We expect unwavering support of the countrymen for the implementation of these programmes. We expect responsible, constructive and patriotic role from the news media. When some failures of Bangladesh are published through a foreign source, it is widely publicised by a category of media in the country. But it is unfortunate that the successes of Bangladesh are not given similar coverage. While presenting the results of a survey titled 'progress of children' in New York a few days ago, the Executive Director of the United Nations Agency UNICEF had said, 98 countries of the world would fail to bring down the infant mortality rate by two-thirds within the year 2015. Specifically mentioning the name of Bangladesh, she said that Bangladesh is outside this list of 98 countries. She said, Bangladesh is on course to achieve reduction of infant mortality rate by two-thirds within 2015. She also said, compared to large countries of South Asia - India and Pakistan - Bangladesh has achieved widespread success in curbing infant deaths. News of this extraordinary success of Bangladesh has been publicised by the BBC World Service Television a number of times.

The prestige and confidence of the nation would have got a boost if the news of this success was widely publicised by the Bangladeshi media by attaching due importance to it.

A new moon would appear in the sky next week. The month of practicing abstinence - holy Ramadan - would commence. I pray to Allah, let this practice of self-denial bring self-restraint, tolerance and welfare in our national life. The autumnal Durga Puja festival is also ahead. I extend my best wishes in advance to the members of the country's Hindu community. My dear countrymen, Let the coming year be a year of advancing the trend of our accomplishments. Come, let us all become vocal against all things evil, ugly and mean. Come, let us move forward on the hard path of reality by containing our emotions. Come, let us all forge ahead on the path of an illumined future by remaining united.

Allah Hafez  
Bangladesh Zindabad