

2 years of change



Special Supplement

Art & Design : Department of Films & Publications ♦ Assistance : Press Information Department, Ministry of Information

The Communication Infrastructure is being Changed Changes will there be in Bangladesh

Syed Abul Hossain

The present grand-alliance government has been working ceaselessly to convert the country into a nation of medium income since it assumed the responsibility. Improved communication infrastructure is a pre-condition to sustainable and stable economic development. With the realisation of this fact, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has attached top priority to the communication infrastructure for building the digital Bangladesh. The Ministry of Communication has undertaken massive programs to build a country-wide safe, well protected, environment-friendly and economical communication network under the direction of the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The remarkable projects which have already been completed are cited below:

- ★ Construction of Dhaka bypass road via Joydebpur-Debpur-Vulta-Madanpur (inaugurated by Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina).
- ★ Construction of Shahid Ahsan Ullah Master flyover at Tongi railway crossing point on a span of one kilometer along Tongi-Kaliganj-Ghorasal-Panchdona road. (inaugurated by Hon'ble Prime Minister).
- ★ Construction of Sultana Kamal Bridge on the Shitalakha river (inaugurated by Hon'ble Prime Minister).
- ★ Construction of the 3rd Karnafuli Bridge (inaugurated by Hon'ble Prime Minister).
- ★ Construction of Vogai Bridge on the Vogai river along the Shimanta (Frontier) road. (Shandhyakurha-Hatipagarh-Haluaghat) road (inaugurated by Hon'ble Prime Minister).
- ★ 3rd Buriganga Bridge, named as, Martyred Intellectual Bridge (inaugurated by Hon'ble Prime Minister).

The Remarkable Projects under Implementaion : Currently, a total of 103 projects financed from the local and foreign sources are being implemented. An amount of total 1726.06 crore taka, including an amount of 560.97 crore taka as project aid, has been allocated for those. Some of the remarkable projects, among the ongoing projects, include projects for completion of the unfinished Patuakhali-Kuakata road (22 km), construction of three bridges at Kheparaha, Hajipur and Mahipur on the Patuakhali-Kuakata road, construction of the Gouranadi-Agoiljhara-Poisharhat-Gopalganj road, Tungipara-kotalipara (Maizbari) Road development project, Madaripur-Agoiljhara road development and expansion project, construction of link-road with Rajbari district from Pabna to Bandherhat via Najirgang ferryghat, construction of Cox's Bazar-Teknaf-Marinedrive road-2nd phase(from Inani upto Silkhal), construction of Shiba Bridge on Shiba River at 33rd km of Betgram-Tala- Paikgasa- Koira road, construction of Batiaghata Bridge on Shailmari River at 7 km of Gallamari-Batiaghata-Dakop road, construction of PC Gurder Bridge on Shurma River at Kazirbazar near old Keen Bridge.

161 projects have been included in the RADP of the financial year 2010-11 for approval without budget allocation. Out of those 161 projects, 145 projects shall be implemented through finance from home and rest 16 projects shall be implemented by foreign aid.

Development of Road Communication System of South-west Region : The Padma Bridge is considered as an epoch making milestone in the development of the south-west region. Once the Bridge is constructed, the communication network of the whole country with the south-western zone will be improved basically resulting in an urgently requirement of the improvement of the communication infrastructure in the region. The economic prosperity of the country largely depends on the improvement of the communication network of the south-west region which consists of divisional towns of Khulna and Barisal,



the largest mangrove forest of the world - the Sundarbans, part of world heritage, "Kuakata" known as daughter of sea, Mongla, the 2nd largest sea port of the country and the important land ports of Benapol and Bhomra. As a result of construction of the Padma Bridge, the movements of transports in the region will naturally increase. The Roads and Highways Department has already undertaken the following projects for implementation keeping in mind the increased demand of tranports. The remarkable projects under the plan for development of the road communication network in the south-west region are:

Vatiapara-Kalna-Lohagorha-Narhail-Jessore-Benapole road construction project including the Kalna bridge, the project for upgrading the Dhaka-Mawa-Vanga Highway into a 4-lane facility, construction of Kajirtek bridge (7th Bangladesh-China friendship bridge) on the Arhialkha river along the Mostafapur-Madaripur-Shariatpur-Chandpur road, elevating the Khulna-Mongla highway into 4 lane and construction of the link road of the 3rd Shitalakha.

Reduction of Traffic Jam : The present government has started operation of a new fleet of one hundred new buses under the Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) to alleviate the traffic jam situation in the capital city. A total of another one thousand new AC, Non-AC, single, double decker and

Two Years of Progress: At a Glance

January 6, 2011 marks the completion of two years in office by the present government. The government has made successful strides for nation-building keeping in mind the pledges and commitments made in the election manifesto. It can be said quite unhesitatingly after observing this trend of successes that Bangladesh will move far ahead in the application of digital technologies much earlier than 2021 - the golden jubilee year of the country's independence, by keeping pace with the outside world, and would thereby get transformed into a middle-income country. The successes achieved by the pro-people government led by the illustrious daughter of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman 'Deshratna' Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the socio-economic and governance arena during the past two years have been summarised below.

Prime Minister's Office

E-services have been extended up to the union level under the Access to Information (A2I) project. Services have been provided directly to 85 thousand customers through establishment of union information service centres. Representatives and officials from the local and field levels have been imparted training on digital Bangladesh in order to extend services to all citizens of the country. A new momentum has been generated in various fields like agriculture sector, trade and commerce, sale of railway tickets, announcement of examination results, payment of bills, etc.

Decision-making has been expedited by installing video conference systems among various zones under Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority



(BEPZA). Automation systems have been put in place for sanctioning imports and exports at Dhaka and Chittagong EPZs. A new power plant having a capacity of 90 megawatt has been set up in the EPZ area and agreements have been signed for an additional 290 megawatts of electricity. At present around 270 thousand Bangladeshis are employed in the industrial establishments of EPZs, thereby making a notable contribution to alleviation of poverty.

Around 10 thousand landless, uprooted and destitute families have already been rehabilitated under the Asrayan (phase-2) project. The Asrayan-2 project was started from July 2010 and is expected to build barracks and houses in the coastal regions, Chittagong Hill Tracts and other areas for rehabilitating 50 thousand families within June 2014.

Three guidelines are now being finalised under the Policies and Strategies for Public-Private Partnership (PPP), 2010 for implementing PPPs in the country.

Cabinet Division

Training on unicode applications in computers has been completed at 50 ministries/divisions and 7 departments under the supervision of Cabinet Division in order to ensure swift delivery of services for citizens through information technology. Twenty-three ministries/divisions have been connected to a network backbone installed for the secretariat. Exchange of information through e-mails and digital file management have been introduced in field administration. Rangpur has been made an administrative division.

Establishment Ministry

Work is in progress for introducing performance-based evaluation method



instead of the existing annual confidential reports in order to enhance the accountability of public administration. Necessary steps have been taken for digital filing, file tracking and noting for expeditious communication and disposal of files. A total of 665 laptops and internet connections have been provided for motivating the officials to apply information technology.

Digital Bangladesh Architect Yeafesh Osman

The Bengalee nation had a dream, which was shown by the greatest Bengalee of all times - the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. We achieved our independence through a war of liberation after a long stretch of movements and struggle in order to realize that dream. Half of that dream has now materialised, but our struggle for freedom or economic emancipation is yet to be crowned with success. The dream of a Golden Bangla is yet to be attained. Bangabandhu's daughter and leader of the masses Sheikh Hasina had declared a pledge to build a Digital Bangladesh based on 'Vision-2021' in the election manifesto of 2008, keeping in mind her father's dream. The main idea of a Digital Bangladesh is to groom the nation as a knowledge-based middle-income country by the year 2021 through utilisation of technologies. It aspires for a poverty and hunger-free Bangladesh through overall uplift of the living standard of Bangla's inhabitants. The present government has worked relentlessly during the past two years for achieving that objective. It is a matter of satisfaction that the use of technology, especially that of information technology, has increased substantially due to the involvement of the masses in sincere endeavours of the government. People have realized that positive changes were taking place in their lives due to application of technology. I consider it to be a huge success of the government. The government has succeeded in creating a space of confidence among the citizenry.

The development vision of Sheikh Hasina has striven to bring backward segments of the country's population to the mainstream by offering them additional assistance. In order to materialise that, our objective has been to build a Digital Bangladesh by involving all citizens of the country. Technology is considered/A path for progress/Digital Bangladesh/Will be for all our masses.

We feel more encouraged when we hear from the IT technologists of the present generation: "Digital Bangladesh is not a distant world. It is our own world. It is merely a guarantee for becoming more developed, speedier and acquiring more sensitive technology at affordable prices. Again, it also implies different worlds for different individuals. For a student, it is an assurance for obtaining high quality education. For a farmer, it is a guarantee for a market for the crops he produces. For a sick man, it is a guarantee for getting good treatment, freedom from standing in the queue day after day. For a government employee, it is the best medium for communication and evaluation of his work. For a pensioner, a freedom fighter and a widow, it is a guarantee for obtaining safety allowances and pensions with transparency. The main theme in the philosophy of Digital Bangladesh is to ensure the empowerment of people through optimum utilisation of technology, establishment of good governance and above all to meet the needs of all citizens at their doorsteps. Digital Bangladesh will be implemented for the welfare of all citizens irrespective of their wealth or status."

The ICT Policy was adopted in April soon after formation of the present government. A total of 306 action plans were taken up in its main programme for implementation. The policy has fixed immediate steps, medium-term measures and long-term actions for all ministries. As a result, all bodies of the government are getting ready for e-governance. The Ministry of Science and Information & Communication Technology is coordinating the whole endeavour.

Many of you have witnessed the digital innovation fair held at Bangabandhu Novo-theatre earlier this year. Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had inaugurated the fair. Local and foreign policy-makers, experts and officials from over hundred organizations were present at the inauguration. Explaining the significance of digital Bangladesh, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had said then, "It implied paying bills through mobile phones, buying railway tickets from home, getting healthcare from upazila level doctors while staying in the village." She further said that we had made a pledge before the election to build a digital Bangladesh. We have chosen information technology as a tool to fulfil that



commitment. We seek to ensure transparency, accountability and good governance at all layers of administration. Those who are working and providing leadership to the administrative and service sectors of the government have to think anew. They will have to find out how services can be ensured for the country's 150 million people. We do not want the people to move from door to door of administration for services; rather, we want services to reach the doorsteps of the citizens. We have for the first time succeeded in presenting our good intentions before the people. You have noticed, that even the secretaries of ministries were now telling the people what they would do for the common man during the coming year. These are big changes. We also witnessed during the digital fair that a canopy of honest competition has been put in place among the concerned ministries in this area.

Many things can be said about our successes in information technology during the past two years. These include getting exam results through SMS and registering for university admission from home. Mention can also be made about the delivery orders received by sugarcane growers through mobile SMS. If I say in a simple language, then it would sound something like this:

To register or to get result/ Please send SMS/It saves time and expense/ The country is changing. At mill-gates the sugarcane growers/ No more need to stand in queues/It saves time and expense/The country is changing. Tenders are also online/Various tickets and bills/Saves so many hassles/Difficulties will soon vanish.

I have a firm conviction that people's interest in technology, especially information technology, has increased because of these developments. As a consequence, the number of mobile-phone users has increased by over 20 million during the past two years. And at governmental level, we were also inspired to establish 4,501 union information service centres throughout the country. Even unions without electricity supply have not been left out. Besides, information centres have also been set up at 125 upazilas and information portals were launched for 64 districts. We are optimistic that by the grace of Almighty, we shall succeed in building a digital Bangladesh as desired by Bangabandhu's daughter, before the year 2021.

Translation: Helal Uddin Ahmed

