

Full text of PM's address to nation

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday sought cooperation of the people in realising her government's Vision-2021 programme as she addressed the nation marking completion of two years of the Awami League-led grand alliance in office.

"We may not reap immediately the benefits of the programme we undertook in the past years... as we had to start everything afresh because our preceding governments had left no development programmes for us to follow," she said.

She, however, said people will see the results of her government's development programmes in course of time while she listed the sector-wise achievements in the past two years.

"I urge the countrymen, have a little patience, cooperate with us, Insha Allah (Allah willing) we will definitely fulfill our commitments," the premier said.

Hasina said being a party of general people, Awami League intends to ensure optimum development of the country through the promotion of ordinary people and the past two years of development initiatives carried the testimonies to its commitments.

But she said a quarter that had amassed wealth looting people's money and siphoned out a huge amount of money abroad was now trying to obstruct the progress of the country.

"They earlier tried to foil the Bangabandhu murder trial and now they want to obstruct the war crimes trial. We seek countrymen's support in this regard," Hasina said.

The premier said her government will continue to work to fulfill the electoral pledges discarding the obstacles as "we are working for the benefit of the people, not for personal gain."

She urged all irrespective of political affiliation to join hands leaving aside the petty differences and work for the country's welfare.

"We have already passed 40 years since the independence, the dream of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for an exploitation-free society, the 'Golden Bangla' is yet to be realised," Hasina said.

She expected Bangladesh to be as the most peaceful and dignified nation in South Asia.

Since taking office, the premier said, "My colleagues and I are frantically trying to change the lot of the common people."

Requesting the countrymen to compare the first two-year tenure between the present government and the BNP-Jamaat alliance government, she said, "You will see how much success we achieved in the last two years."

Hasina said all democratic institutions of the country were destroyed during the seven-year rule of the four-party alliance government and the caretaker government.

Bangladesh, she said, was known abroad as the country of terrorism, corruption and extremism and it was a very difficult task to keep the country functional by removing the maladies left by them and fighting global recession.

"I can firmly say we are trying our best and we also achieved many successes and infused dynamism into economy," she said.

The PM said her government has taken a tough stance against terrorism and corruption and became successful in restoring peace in the life of the people.

On price of essentials, the PM said, "When we formed the government, the prices of essentials including rice were skyrocketing. But we were able to bring them down significantly."

"Due to our pragmatic steps, price of rice per kg was reduced to Tk 18 to 20 from Tk 45," she said.

Later, the price was increased to Tk 28 to ensure that the farmers get a fair price, she said.

"We are investigating

why the price of rice went up in the peak season and taking proper steps in this regard," she added.

The prime minister said her government is concerned as the prices of essentials increased to a great extent internationally influencing the local market.

Calling upon the countrymen to raise agriculture production, she said, "Do not leave a single inch of

government completed its five-year term in 2001, all sectors, including economy, agriculture, industry and power, were in a strong position, she said.

"Inflation was 1.59 percent; the country became self-sufficient in food; literacy rate was increased to 65.5 percent, while power production went up to 4,300MW from 1,600MW during the past AL government," she said, adding that



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

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land uncultivated, the government will assist you."

The premier said her government has raised salary of the government officials and employees as well as the working class people, while the income of the people went up to one-and-a-half to two times.

Hasina said Bangladesh has been established as a liberal, democratic and economically potential country.

"Bangladesh achieved United Nations MDG Award for its significant progress in reducing child and mother mortality rate. And it is an achievement for the entire nation," she said.

The PM said international journals -- The Economist and The Wall Street Journal -- and different organisations highly praised the current activities of the government. "In the U N Human Development Report 2010, Bangladesh has been placed third out of 95 countries," she said.

When the previous AL

her government had also undertaken many projects in these sectors.

But after assuming office in 2001 through a rigged election, Hasina said, the BNP-Jamaat alliance government stopped their unfinished works out of vengeance. Besides, she said, they also cancelled a large number of approved projects, causing huge losses for the country.

The premier in her speech gave special focus on the economic sector, which was significantly vibrant amidst global recession.

She referred to some significant achievements in the financial sector under in the past two years.

One of the historical achievements was the highest ever reserves of foreign exchange that crossed \$ 10 billion mark on November 11, 2009 for the first time in the country's history.

The reserves, which were only \$ 5.41 billion in November 2008 before the AL formed government, rose by over 91 percent in one year and stood at \$ 10.09 billion on December 21.

"Bangladesh has become the third largest exporters on the global apparels market even after economic downturn in the major importing countries," the premier said, adding that it happened because of the timely stimulus packages offered by the government to the country's readymade garment sector.

Export sector, which also marked a phenomenal 41 percent rise in the first half of the current 2010-11 financial year, was given special attention in the past two years to cope with the recession fallout.

The other significant progress was the increase in the per capita income that rose to \$ 780, an encouraging advancements towards promoting country to the middle-income group from low-level status.

Revenue income was also another area of major success, which surpassed the target by 22.6 percent in the first quarter of the cur-

rent fiscal year.

The PM said country's economic growth is six percent when the rest of the world faced financial crisis.

She said her government wants to increase the per capita income to \$ 2,000 by 2021.

To achieve this goal, the government in the past two years created conducive atmosphere to promote both domestic and foreign investments and create employment.

"The contribution of industrial sector to GDP should be increased to 40 percent by 2021," she said.

Hasina referred to the public-private partnership (PPP), a landmark initiative of her government, to foster large-scale investment involving government and private sectors.

"The interest rate of bank loans has been reduced to 13 percent from 17 percent to encourage investment," she said.

She said the government allocated Tk 38,500 crore for Annual Development Programme (ADP) and streamlined the monitoring process for its proper implementation.

Hasina said the government employees also got increased salary packages when the government announced the minimum wage for the garment workers.

She said the government took various initiatives to ease the remittance process and stop money laundering. These steps include opening of money exchanges and

bank branches overseas.

"The migrant Bangladeshis now can send money to their beneficiaries at home within 24 hours," Hasina said.

Referring to the Expatriate Welfare Bank, the PM said the Bank would help people get jobs overseas without going through the pain of selling home, crop land and other assets.

She said the passport and visa process have been improved in line with the international standard.

Besides the successes in the core economic issues, the PM also cited some social-economic areas where her government gave special attention to meet the basic needs of citizens.

Major initiatives to this effect include four planned satellite towns around the capital city and one lakh apartments to meet the increasing accommodation problems of middle-income group in Dhaka.

Hasina said the government would take similar programme in every district and upazila to offer people affordable housing.

The PM said the government is working persistently towards achieving the target of Digital Bangladesh by 2021.

"Already we have formulated ICT Policy 2009 and established 1,600 computer labs in educational institutions, 20 cyber centres in different universities, 152 community e-centres and information centres in 64 districts," she said.

Besides, she said 4,501 information service centres had been set up at union level.

"A high-tech park will be set up in Kaliakoir and an ICT incubator will be built in Karwan Bazar to help expanding ICT industry," the PM said.

Referring to the technology park being built in the capital city, Hasina said initiative had been taken to set up similar park at all the divisional headquarters.

She said the government also included the ICT education in the national curriculum and distributed 1,500 laptop computers to different schools across the country.

Hasina said effective measures had also been taken to produce cheaper laptop computers at home.

The PM said all the unions would have fibre optic cable connection by 2013.

Focusing on her government's plan to solve the country's existing power crisis, the premier said it has undertaken immediate, medium and long-term programmes to meet the present electricity demand as construction of a new power plant takes three or four years.

She said construction works of 33 power plants with a total capacity of 2,941 megawatts have already been started and tenders have been invited for setting up 24 more plants capable of generating 3,840MW.

Apart from this, the PM said her government has

also undertaken a programme to set up power plants to produce 12,000MW electricity during the next five years.

Hasina said process is on to set up 2000MW Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant with the cooperation of Russia.

Besides, steps have been taken to import electricity from India, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar to meet the growing demand at home.

Process has been completed for importing 500 MW electricity from India by 2012," she added.

The PM said her government has so far distributed 1.05 crore energy-saving CFL bulbs among the people free of cost to save electricity and another 1.75 crore CFL bulbs would be distributed among the consumers.

Hasina said the crisis in power sector deepened due to mismanagement and corruption of the past BNP-Jamaat government as it did not take any initiative to produce a single megawatt of electricity during its tenure.

She said her previous government during 1996-2001 had increased the country's power generation from 1,600MW to 4,300MW and took massive projects in the interest of the people.

"But, the BNP-Jamaat government after coming to power through a rigged election in 2001 suspended all unfinished and approved projects just because of its political vengeance which caused immense harm to the nation," she added.

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