

# Full text of PM's address to nation

# Dhaka gets closer

**FROM PAGE 5**  
The premier said her government is trying its best to solve the power crisis to bring the country out of the crisis at the soonest.

She said the government has already started work to produce electricity from sources like liquid fuel, coal, diesel and renewable energy along with the setting up of gas-based power plants.

On the development of new gas fields and extraction of gas, she said her government is implementing various programmes to increase the country's gas production. Besides, steps have been taken to import liquefied natural gas (LNG) equivalent to the volume of 500 million cubic feet daily by 2012.

Hasina said daily gas production in the country has increased to 2,035 million cubic feet last month while the production was 1,750 million cubic feet in 2009.

Regarding the country's law and order, the PM said the situation is better than anytime in the past as the government has taken stern actions against the terrorist and militant groups.

"The present government believes that better law and order is the prime and foremost condition for development. We have taken measures so that people can freely move and do their business safely and sleep without any anxiety," she said.

Extending her sincere thanks to the members of law enforcement agencies including police, RAB and intelligence services, the premier said people enjoyed festivity in real terms during last two Eids, Puja and Christmas. They went for shopping till midnight as the law and order was excellent, she noted.

Referring to trial of incident of BDR carnage in Pikhana in February 2009, the PM said new law has been enacted for this trial. Necessary measures were also taken to strengthen the Border Guards and equip it with modern artillery.

The PM highlighted her government's initiative to maintain law and order in industrial zones and said Industrial Police has been formed to check any violence in the industries.

The process for formation of the Tourist Police, Marine Police, Security and Protection Battalion and Police Bureau of Counter Terrorism is now progressing.

Hasina said her government has been making

relentless efforts for implementing various programmes for welfare of the freedom fighters. As part of it, she said, the honorarium of the freedom fighters has been raised to Taka 2,000 from Taka 900 and 30 percent government jobs has been kept reserved for their children and grand children.

Expressing her government's firm commitment to ensure free flow of information, the PM said the government has enacted Right to Information Act (RTA) and Information Commission to make sure citizens' access to all information.

She said Bangladesh media is enjoying full freedom. Present government after taking power has given permission to 12 new television channels, 14 Community Radio and one FM radio. We, for the first time in the country, allowed private television channel when we came to power in 1996, the premier noted.

Hasina reiterated her electoral pledge to strengthen local government system and said Upazila Parishad Act-1998 has been amended to set up local government at upazila level. Laws related to Pourasabha, City Corporation and Union Parishad have been amended to hold election at local level, she said.

The PM said 4,484 unions were allocated Taka 442 crore this year to carry out their development programme, she said.

Pointing out the vulnerability of Bangladesh to climate change, the PM said international community ranked Bangladesh as the riskiest among the ten countries vulnerable to climate change.

"We have established our own fund to face the risk and so far undertaken 134 projects to face the adverse impact of climate change," the PM said.

The premier welcomed the decision of global climate conference to form a Green Climate Fund (GCF) to support the developing countries to address climate change and said the present government from its own fund so far allocated Taka 1,400 crore for climate change.

She said projects were taken for capital dredging of the Gorai and Jamuna Rivers and re-excavation of the drying rivers to revive their channels.

The PM said her government has made the parliament as the focal point of all democratic practice. A total of 130 laws were passed in 174 working days of the 9th

Jatiya Sangsad in last two years, she said.

All important decisions of the government and issues including national education policy, poverty reduction strategy paper, nuclear power plant, climate change, proposal for making Bangla as the official language of the UN were discussed in the parliament.

She said all parliamentary committees are working regularly, despite the opposition's complete failure to play their role in the House. The opposition was present only 44 days out of 174 working days in last two years while Leader of the Opposition attended the House only five days though they are allowed to raise any issue in the parliament.

The PM said the government has executed the National Human Rights Commission to ensure basic right of people.

The Anti-Corruption Commission and Election Commission are also working freely.

The judiciary is enjoying complete freedom and working to establish rule of law in the country, Hasina said.

Describing agriculture as the main driving force of economy, Hasina said her government has been implementing various programmes to make the country self-sufficient again in food.

She said her government has reduced fertilizer price three times during the last two years, distributed agricultural cards, provided subsidy and agri-inputs to farmers and facilitate them to open bank account with an initial deposit of only Taka 10.

She said her government would distribute Taka 12,000 crore agricultural loans among the farmers during this fiscal though it has disbursed a loan of Taka 11,117 crore in the last fiscal.

"With these initiatives, fair price of agriculture produce has been ensured," she added.

Hasina said her government has reinvigorated the country's dying jute industry through genome sequencing of jute, once called as 'golden fibre' of Bangladesh. With the government's initiatives, farmers are now selling per maund of jute at Taka 2,000 to 2,500, she added.

Besides, she said her government has been distributing food free of cost among the poor and low-income people while a programme of selling rice through ration among the Class-IV government employees, police and vil-

lage police force is going on.

Regarding 'Monga', she said her present government has been successful to eliminate the seasonal famine in the northern region of the country.

She said her government has allocated Taka 331 crore in providing allowances for the distressed and elderly women as it has increased the number of beneficiaries as well as the amount of the allowances.

Besides, she said Taka 1,176 crore has been spent in implementing the programme for creating jobs for the ultra poor people in the current fiscal.

Apart from this, she said her government is implementing "Ekti Bari, Ekti Khamar" (One homestead, one farm), Ashrayan (housing) projects for homeless people and providing collateral free loan to the unemployed youths.

Focusing on various programmes being implemented in health sector, she said her previous government had taken a step to set up 18,000 community clinics across the country to reach medical services to the doorsteps of people.

But, she regretted that the BNP-Jamaat government suspended the project. "After assuming office this time, we have introduced 10,000 community clinics," she added. Besides, she said the present government has recruited 13,500 healthcare providers, 4,500 doctors, 2,000 nurses and 6,500 health assistants.

She said all upazila health complexes have been brought under internet service when maternity leave has been increased to six months.

The PM said her government is working to bring about qualitative changes in the education sector.

The government has formulated a science-based and time-befitting education policy in consultation with all, she said and vowed to remove illiteracy from the country by 2014.

She said distribution of 23 crore books among the primary and secondary school students has started and the books are also available on the website.

Holding terminal examinations for class V and class VII students have begun and the success rate in secondary and higher secondary exams in last two years was about 80 percent, she added.

Hasina said her government has raised the number of stipends for school students to 30 lakh from 17 lakh and included 1,624 educational institutions in the monthly payment order (MPO).

The present government has recruited about 52,000 assistant teachers and about 2,000 headmasters for primary schools, she added.

The PM said work has started to construct 3,000 secondary schools, academic buildings in 71 colleges and 306 model schools.

Eleven secondary schools and six colleges are being set up in Dhaka city, she said and added that one university would be established in every district of the country.

Hasina said the government has formulated a new law to enhance quality of education in private universities.

For expansion of higher education, University of Professionals has been opened in Dhaka, Begum Rokeya University in Rangpur and Science and Technology University in Pabna, she said.

Work has started for setting up six specialised universities, she said and added that initiatives have been taken to set up one technical school in every upazila.

The PM said madrasa education is being modernised and religious education has been made compulsory at the secondary level.

Thirty model madrasas have been set up, vocational

courses introduced in 100 madrasas and honours courses opened in 31 madrasas, she said and urged all to educate the new generation properly in religious education and modern teachings.

The PM said her government brought about radical changes in country's communications system in last two years.

"We have already inaugurated Sultana Kamal Bridge, Shaheed Buddhijibi Bridge and Chittagong Shah Amanat Bridge," she said and also referred to construction of Dhaka bypass road, Dapdapia Bridge and the bridges to be constructed over the Karotoa and Tista rivers.

Dhaka-Chittagong and Chittagong-Hathajari highways are being upgraded into four-lane roads. Joydebpur-Mymensing and some other highways would also be brought under the process, she said.

The premier said the main construction work for the much-expected Padma Bridge will begin soon along with the construction of railway lines on both the sides.

About measures to ease traffic jam in Dhaka city, she said the Bijoy Sarani and Tongi Ahsanullah Master flyover have been opened and the constriction of Kuril, Gulistan-Jatrabari and Banani-Jurain flyovers is going on.

The PM said the construction of 26km elevated expressway will begin in Dhaka soon. Study on metro rail in Dhaka has also completed.

She mentioned introduction of 100 new BRTC buses in Dhaka and said 430 more buses would be pressed into service soon.

Referring to the opening of Aminbazar-Sadarghat waterway around Dhaka city, she said steps have been taken to introduce commuter trains on Dhaka-Narayanganj, Dhaka-Joydebpur and Dhaka-Mymensingh routes.

**FROM PAGE 1**  
new bilateral relations.

Bangladesh has agreed to let India use its ports in Chittagong and Mongla, along with two other South Asian neighbours Nepal and Bhutan. In return, India has agreed to allow transit facilities to Bangladesh for trading with the two land-locked countries through Bangladesh.

Dhaka has also signed a deal to allow India use its Ashuganj river port for transport of equipment for an electricity plant New Delhi is building in Tripura.

However, securing a loan of \$1 billion from India mainly to upgrade road and railway infrastructures is seen as a major gain in the government's foreign policy. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh rushed his most senior colleague Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee to Dhaka to witness the signing of the loan agreement.

In forging closer ties with India the government remained unfazed by criticism from the main opposition BNP that accuses the prime minister of giving too much to New Delhi and getting too little in exchange.

Bangladesh and India are yet to reach an agreement on sharing the waters of river Teesta, settle the dispute over 6.5 kilometres of the border and remove the trade imbalance that heavily favours New Delhi.

The past years have also witnessed Dhaka taking steps to strengthen its trade and economic relations with China, one of its long-time friends.

Invited by Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, Sheikh Hasina paid an official visit to China in March last year producing a 10-point comprehensive Joint Communiqué to intensify cooperation in trade, investment, agriculture, transport and infrastructure development.

Bangladesh is seeking Chinese assistance in building a seaport deep in the Bay of Bengal and offering Beijing to use it through a

proposed highway from Bangladesh's southeastern part to the Chinese city of Kunming through Myanmar.

Hasina travelled to India, China, South Korea, USA, Kuwait, Russia, Japan, Belgium, Bhutan, and Malaysia last year.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, however, visited over two dozen countries and attended several international and regional events. She held talks with at least 100 foreign counterparts, ministers and high level officials of various international bodies.

A bright spot has been Bangladesh's success in clearing its name from the list of countries that harbour extremism and corruption. The country is currently commanding an image of a non-communal democratic country.

The prime minister undertook an important visit to Japan, the largest donor and development partner of Bangladesh. Japan has agreed to provide Bangladesh an additional \$100 million for the construction of Padma multi-purpose bridge.

Sheikh Hasina also visited Russia to attend a conference on how to protect the Royal Bengal Tigers of the Sundarbans. She used the tour as an opportunity to discuss Russian help in setting up nuclear energy-based power plant.

Bangladesh did well to project its vulnerability to the climate change due to global warming. At all international conferences, including the ones in Copenhagen and Cancun, Bangladesh strongly put its case as a climate change victim, highlighting the people's plight and impediments it posed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

In response to Hasina's appeal for the transfer of green technology and new money from the Global Climate Change Fund to enhance the country's adaptive capabilities, developed economies agreed to assist

Bangladesh by providing financial and technological assistance.

Diplomatic analysts think Bangladesh spent the past two years in laying the foundation of a new-look foreign policy. They say 2011 will be the year for Bangladesh in getting the benefit.

Middle Eastern countries, including Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, are likely to gradually open up recruitment of Bangladeshis, they added.

The UAE has already increased manpower import from Bangladesh. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's upcoming visit to UAE (January 16-19) will further open up opportunities for Bangladesh, assumed the analysts.

China and Korea have already allowed duty free access to several thousand Bangladeshi items and the country would reap the benefits when the opportunities are properly utilised.

On the negative side, the government is yet to make progress in resolving long-standing issues with Myanmar and Pakistan.

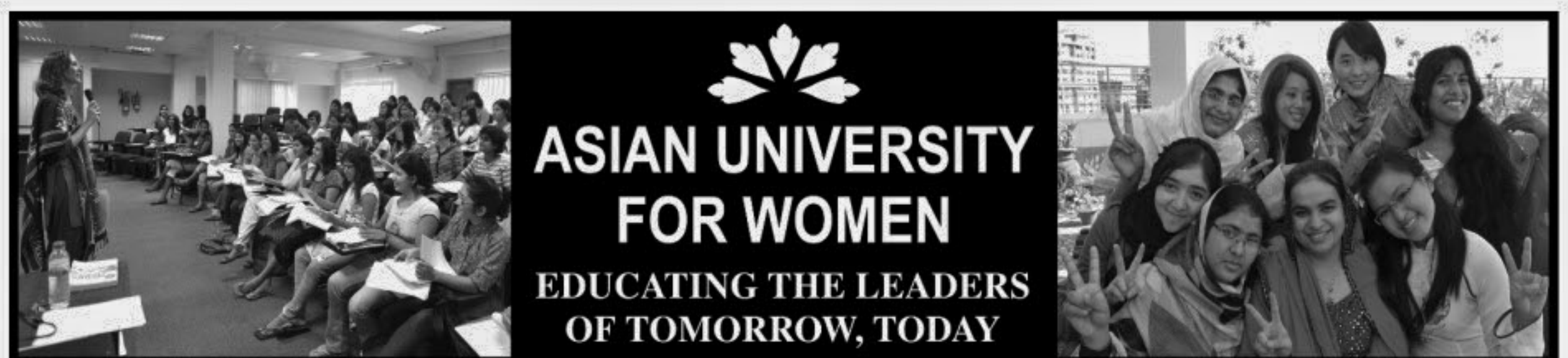
Pakistan has rejected a proposal of Bangladesh seeking formal apology for committing crimes against humanity during the Liberation War in 1971.

Longstanding issues and irritants with Myanmar could not be resolved in two years as the repatriation of Myanmar refugees, border problems and demarcation of maritime boundary in the Bay remain unsettled.

There was heightened tension along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border over the deployment of Myanmar troops since 2008.

In multilateral diplomacy at the United Nations, the government also gained points by becoming a member of several UN bodies securing the highest votes in some.

In the UN peacekeeping missions, Bangladesh continued its success holding the position of the top troops-contributing country.



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