

Full text of prime minister's address to nation

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday addressed the nation to mark the completion of three years of the five-year tenure of her government. Following is the English rendering of her address.

Dear countrymen,
Assalamu Alaikum.

Tomorrow is 6th January.

We formed the government on January 6 three years ago with your blessings and huge mandate through Bangladesh's history's most free, fair and neutral polls on December 29, 2008.

On this day, I would again express my gratitude for those voters, including men, women and youth, whose unequivocal support ensured our victory.

We are making relentless efforts to fulfil our pledges to you, facing many hurdles. We will not claim hundred percent success in all fields. But I can say our government did not indulge in any negligence. It will never do that in future too, Insha Allah.

Honourable countrymen,

I recall with profound respect the greatest Bangalee of all times, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, under whose leadership Bangladesh had emerged as an independent state 40 years ago.

I recall with deep pain in my heart all the martyrs of the history's most tragic carnage on August 15, 1975. I also recall four national leaders -- Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, M Mansur Ali and AHM Quamruzzaman -- who were brutally killed in Dhaka Central Jail on November 3, 1975.

I recall Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Haque, champion of democracy Hossein Shahid Suhrawardi, Majlum Jananeta Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani and all other national leaders.

We have earned independence in exchange for supreme sacrifices made by 30 lakh martyrs and honour of two lakh mothers and sisters. I recall their sacrifices with profound respect. I convey my deep respect to the nation's best sons -- the freedom fighters.

I recall 22 leaders and activists, including Ivy Rahman, who embraced martyrdom in brutal grenade attacks on August 21, 2004.

I recall 21,000 leaders, activists and innocent people, including Shah AMS Kibria and Ahsanullah Master, who were killed during the BNP-Jamaat misrule.

I convey my humble respect to those who laid down their lives in the struggles to establish people's rights to vote and bread.

Conscious countrymen,

I had started journey towards the path of light after taking the charge in an era of darkness. Along with serious crisis in international economy, global recession, gradual rise in food price all over the world, we have to overcome the mountainous load of problems inherited from the two previous governments.

By facing these challenges with courage, honesty and sincerity, we are proceeding and Bangladesh is progressing.

Democracy and development is a continuous process. The people form government with votes as per their liking. Those who assume office would take forward the development activities of the previous government. Those in opposition would help the government in this job. Our parties and ideologies may be different, but the interests of the country and the people would have to be placed above the parties and opinions.

But I have to say with sorrow that we did not get any cooperation from the opposition in running the country in last three years. Rather they took stance against the interests of the country and the people many times while opposing the government.

They have been boycotting parliament without any reason month after month. The Leader of the Opposition attended parliament only for six days. She delivered uninterrupted speeches hour and after hour in parliament. Even then, why is this boycott?

We have restored the spirit and values of independence by passing the 15th constitutional amendment in the Jatiya Sangsad.

The honourable President is holding talks with all political parties to form an independent, neutral and strong Election Commission. I congratulate this initiative of the President on behalf of the people.

Conscious citizens,

It was our election pledge that we would try those who had killed people, repressed women and children during our great Liberation War. The people of the country, particularly the young generation voters, had given their mandate in favour of the trial of those accused of committing crimes against humanity.

When we started the trial of those

accused of war crimes, then the Opposition Leader is trying to protect the war criminals. She is conspiring to create instability in the country through arson, hartal and killing men. I would request her not to try to protect these anti-humanity Razakars-Albadars through arsons.

Therefore, I would like to say unequivocally that we must try the war criminals on the soil of Bangla, no matter whatever hindrances come. Many had tried to stop trial of Bangabandhu's killers, but they could not. None would be able to stop trial of the war criminals too, Insha Allah.

Dear countrymen,

We gave priority to the welfare of the country and the people in the election manifesto of Bangladesh Awami League. We are working to this end since the first day after forming the government.

Bringing commodity prices under the purchasing capacity of people was a big challenge for us. The price of rice was Tk 40 to 45 on the day when we assumed office. We have reduced that despite continuous price hike in the international market.

At the same time, we increased the income and purchasing capacity of the people. The rural people have found the path for self-employment. Per capita income has increased to \$828 from \$660. We increased salaries of government officers and employees.

Service age limit has been raised to 59 years from 57 years. Minimum wage for garment workers has been raised to Tk 3,000 from Tk1,600. Now the rural farm labourers get Tk300 to Tk500 per day in place of Tk100. They could buy 2.5 to 3 kilograms of rice for Tk 100. Now they can buy 10 to 12 kgs.

The rate of poverty has come down to 30% from 40%.

We have been able to give the economy a firm footing despite the global recession. Investment has increased in country. Production increased too. Export increased by about \$750 crore. Manpower export has increased. The country received \$9.2 billion remittance when we assumed office, which has now increased to \$12 billion.

Extensive job opportunities have been created. More than 4.5 lakh men and women have got employment in only public sector. The country achieved 6.7% growth in last fiscal. The target has been fixed at 7% this fiscal.

Dear countrymen,

You know, how devastated the power sector was when we formed government. The BNP-Jamaat government and caretaker government could not increase even a single megawatt in five years and in two years respectively. We left behind 4,300 MW in 2001, which had reduced to 3,268 MW in next seven years.

We generated an additional 2,900 MW in three years with our sincere efforts and hard work. We started construction of 49 power plants immediately after assuming office. Of those, 24 have started power generation. The construction of the remaining power plants will be completed soon. Besides, giving work order for 33 power plants with a total capacity of 5,857 MW is under process now.

The government is working for building gas- and coal-based power plants. Agreements have been signed to build three coal-based power plants in private sector. A cooperation deal has been signed with Russia to set up a 2,000 MW nuclear power plant in Rooppur. Process is going on to import power from India, Myanmar and Bhutan.

Four and a half lakh new subscribers have got connections.

Extensive programmes have been implemented in gas production and distribution sector. As a result, daily gas production capacity has increased to 350 million CFT. Digging of Suldapur, Semutang, Saldanadi and Fenchuganj gas wells has been completed.

Production of 85 million CFT gas daily will start from these wells soon. Bangladesh Gas Act 2010 has been made. Bapex has been strengthened. The capacity of Bapex has been enhanced by procuring a modern rig and a work-over rig.

Greater Chittagong-based Karnaphuli Gas Distribution Company Ltd and Sundarban Gas Distribution Company Ltd have been formed.

Ensuring food security and boosting agricultural production were our major election pledges. The government has been largely successful in fulfilling the pledges during its three years in office.

A record 14 lakh 76 thousand and 115 tonnes of food grains has remained in stock of food godowns. New food godowns with the capacity of 1.35 lakh tonnes have been constructed across the country including 140 food godowns with the capacity of 1.10 lakh tonnes in the northern region. The size and allocation of different programmes including OMS, VGD, VGF, GR and Food for Work have been

increased. The number of beneficiaries was raised to 4.17 crore from three crore.

Twelve lakh fair price cards were distributed aiming at providing food assistance to low and limited income group of people. The people of Monga prone north Bengal are now able to have two square meals.

Insha Allah, Bangladesh would be turned into a food surplus country through achieving self-sufficiency in food production by 2013. I believe that the country will live on with the survival of agriculture and farmers as well. In line with this belief, the government has taken all out measures for agricultural development.

For the first time in the country, 1.40 crore farmers were provided with Agricultural Inputs Assistance Cards. For the first time in the country's history, farmers have got the opportunity to open bank account with Tk10 and 93.50 lakh farmers have opened bank account so far. We, for the first time, are providing collateral free loan to the share croppers.

Agreement has been signed to establish "Saarc Food Bank" to ensure availability of quality seeds in the Saarc countries.

Price of non-urea fertilisers has been reduced thrice. The existing price of TSP is Tk22 per kg which was Tk80. The price of MOP is Tk15 per kg which was Tk70. The price of DAP has been reduced to Tk27 per kg from Tk90.



availability has been increased to 24.75 lakh from 22 lakh. Food assistance is being provided to 7.50 lakh women with 30kg of rice monthly under VGD programme. The number of VGF cards has been increased to one crore 76 thousand from 70.67 lakh.

We have resumed the "Ghore Phera Karmosuchi" (Return to Home) programmes for rehabilitating the rootless people. The programme was suspended by the past BNP government.

Some 10.43 lakh families are being benefited directly under the "One Farm, One Homestead" programme. One lakh nine thousand people were rehabilitated through "Ashrayan Project" launched by the government in 1996. About 9,000 families in the coastal belt were rehabilitated after construction of buildings in the coastal areas under the project.

Dear countrymen,

Our election commitment was to free the country from illiteracy by 2014 and build an educated future generation by developing the quality of education.

Enrolment of 99.64% children to the schools has already been ensured. Pre-primary education for children aged three to five has been introduced at 31,208 government, registered and community primary schools. The number of dropout children has been reduced. A total of 63,000 teachers have been appointed to the primary and secondary education. Stipend is being provided to 78 lakh students in a year.

On the first day of the year, 22,13,66,383 copies of books were distributed among the students up to the secondary level.

Initially 100 percent of the pay scale is being given to the registered and community schoolteachers. About 4,500 government and registered primary schools have been constructed and reconstructed. Laptops with multimedia have been distributed to 503 primary schools.

True history of the Father of the Nation, the Great War of Liberation, the Independence Struggle and the national heroes has been incorporated in the textbooks.

The National Education Policy has been framed. Construction of 11 secondary schools and six colleges is underway in Dhaka to solve admission crisis. Vocational education course has been introduced at 100 madrasas and four honours courses have been launched in 31 madrasas.

University of Professionals in Dhaka, Begum Rokeya University in Rangpur, Pabna Science and Technology University, Barisal University and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology have been established.

Initiatives have been taken to set up Rangamati Science and Technology University, a digital university in Gazipur and Rabindra University at Shelaidaha.

In all, 3,047 ICT labs have been set up at the upazila service centres as well as university, college and school levels.

We have constituted a Tk1,000 crore Education Assistance Trust Fund to provide education assistance to the poor and meritorious students.

Honourable countrymen,

Our election pledge was to ensure health for all. The operation of 13,000 community clinics has been resumed to ensure health for the rural community which was shut down by the BNP-Jamaat alliance government.

Union and health centres have been built in 136 unions, while the construction work of 200 such centres is going on. In all, 301 upazila health complexes have been upgraded to 50 beds from 31, while 109 upazila health complexes

have been upgraded to 50 beds and three upazila health complexes have been to 100 beds from 50 beds. The 31-bed new hospitals which have been constructed in 12 new upazilas will be elevated to 50 beds.

Three district-level hospitals have been upgraded to 100 beds from 50 beds, while a plan has been undertaken to elevate 18 district hospitals to 250 beds. Dhaka Medical College Hospital has been expanded and modernised, while ICU has been introduced at the burn unit of the hospital.

The National Institute of ENT and Head-Neck Cancer Hospital has been set up.

Sheikh Sayera Khatun Medical College and Hospital and Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Eye Hospital and Training Institute have been established in Gopalganj. We have restarted the Sheikh Abu Naser Specialised Hospital in Khulna, which was closed during the rule of the BNP-Jamaat alliance government.

The death rate of newborn babies have been reduced to 37 in every 1,000, while child mortality rate has been come down to 65 in every 1,000. The average life expectancy has gone up to 67 years and it is 68.3 years in the case of women.

Our success in the National Tuberculosis Control and Leprosy Eliminating Programme is almost 100 percent.

Five institutes of health technologies have been set up, while a plan has been taken to build 10 more institutes. Nursing College has been established in Chittagong, while the construction of a nursing training institute is going on in Manikganj. A plan has been undertaken to build six more nursing colleges and to upgrade 15 nursing institutes to nursing colleges.

About 5,000 doctors have been appointed so far. Bangladesh won the United Nations MDG Award in the 65th UN General Assembly in 2010 for achieving MDG-4 related to reducing child mortality rate at the national level.

I was given International Telecommunication Award, the South South News and 'South South Award 2011' by the UN Africa-related Economic Commission as recognition to ensure use of ICT for the qualitative development of the health sector.

Dear countrymen,

We have achieved significant progress in developing the country's communication sector.

Eleven big bridges had been built in the past three years. These are: the Abdur Rab Serniabat Bridge in Doldopdia, Martyred Intellectuals Bridge in Bosila, Dhaka, Ahsan Ullah Master Flyover in Tongi, Sultana Kamal Bridge on Shitalakkhya River, Shah Amanat Bridge on Karnaphuli River in Chittagong, Bogai Bridge at Haluaghat, Sheikhpara Bridge in Madaripur, Najirpur Bridge in Pirojpur, Paysarhat Bridge in Gournadi, Brahmaputra Bridge in Jamalpur and Koyra Bridge on Paikgachha-Koyra road.

Building of the Teesta Bridge on Rangpur-Kurigram road is going on and the construction work of the 7th Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge on Ariakhan River in Patuakhali will begin soon.

The main bridge of the Padma Bridge project, river management, approach roads on the either sides of the bridge and the detailed design have been finalised. Land acquisition and compensation to the affected people had already been completed.

Steps have been taken to build the 6-km second Padma Multipurpose Bridge between Paturia and Goalanda.

The process of building a 26-km elevated expressway from airport to Jatrabari, a flyover from Mirpur to airport over cantonment and an overpass on Banani rail crossing are going on to ease the traffic congestion in the capital.

The Asian Highway includes three routes in Bangladesh sector.

The work for developing Dhaka-Chittagong Highway, Dhaka-Mymensingh Highway, Rangpur Divisional Road, Dhaka-Rangamati Highway, Narayanganj Road and Nabinagar-Chandra Road into four lanes is going on in full swing.

A total of 530 new buses have been imported when 14 buses were introduced in the capital for students and women to help ease traffic congestion.

Some 18,000 professional drivers were given training to reduce road accidents.

Special emphasis has been given to modernise the railway. So far, 85 kms of metre gauge rail track has been developed into dual gauge when construction and rebuilding of 150 rail bridges and refurbishing of 36 railway stations were done. Nine locomotives and 55 wagons were purchased when 45 more locomotives and 220 wagons and passenger carriers were fixed up and renovated.

Eight pairs of new train services

have been introduced on Dhaka-Rangpur, Dhaka-Chittagong and some other routes. Construction of a rail line between Dohajari and Cox's Bazar via Ramu has also started.

The waterways have been developed by increasing the number of ferries, building new pontoons and ships and introducing water buses.

A total of 19 dredgers are collected to improve navigability when 63 lakh cubic metres dredging were completed. Four inland ports were set up while two were modernised. Two nava ports for container services were also built and landing facilities were created in Kanchpur, Sandwip and Kumira.

Some 21 km walkway had been created around Dhaka to protect river banks from grabbers and create a 70 km river route surrounding the capital city.

Two waterbuses were introduced on Sadarghat-Gabatali route in a bid to operate a circular water services for city dwellers.

In the aviation sector, three flights had been introduced on Dhaka-Bangkok, Dhaka-Delhi and Sylhet-London routes.

Two Boeing 777-300s, one 310-330 and two 737-800s were added to the Biman fleet. The process is continuing for collecting two more aircraft for the national flag carrier. A national tourism policy has been formulated to improve the country's tourism sector. The tourism infrastructure and roads and communication were developed in the major tourist spots including in Cox's Bazar, Kuakata, Bandarban and Jaflong.

Dear countrymen,

Our government is providing all kinds of assistance for the development of industry and commerce. The first stimulating package of Tk3,424 crore has been implemented to curb the impact of global recession. The second stimulating package is being implemented.

The industrial policy has been declared to encourage both the government and private sectors for installing industry.

Tk55,890 crore has been distributed in the small and medium industries sectors.

We have inked an agreement with China to install Shahjalal Fertiliser Factory with the annual production capacity of 5.80 lakh tonnes of urea. Initiative has also been taken to install another three urea factories.

BSCIC has invested Tk7,496 crore in small and cottage industries sectors.

Establishment works of the industrial park at Gajaria of Munshiganj district are progressing to produce raw materials of pharmaceutical industries. Construction work of the industrial park in Sirajganj, Kushtia, Comilla and Mirersarai is also going on.

We have resumed the operation of People's Jute Mills in Khulna and Kaomi Jute Mills in Sirajganj, which was shut down during the tenure of BNP-Jamaat government. Besides, the operation of BJMC's 23 jute mills, out of total 27, has been resumed while rest three will be started soon. We have also restarted BTMC's 8 closed mills, out of 18 mills.

The investment grew at 41%. Around \$15 crore has been invested in the first six months of the 2011-12 fiscal. The foreign direct investment was \$266 crore in three years while it was \$260 crore during the five years of BNP-Jamaat government.

Dear countrymen,

Access to information is the right of people. We have formulated the 'Right to Information' act and constituted Information Commission for the first time in the country.

Radio, television and newspapers are enjoying full freedom compared to any other time. We have taken initiative to strengthen the structures of local government. Special programme involving Tk494 crore is being progressed to strengthen the Union Parishads and increase their skill. District administrators have been appointed to the districts. Election of District Council will be held soon. Narayanganj and Comilla city corporations have been formed along with four Pourashabhas.

A total of 742 union parishad complexes have been constructed. Besides, 771 growth centres, around 69 km bridge and culvert, and 11,637 km road have also been constructed, while 18,000 km road and 51 km bridge and culvert have been reconstructed.

A total of 41,000 acres of agricultural khas land has been allocated among 87,346 homeless families.

Around 6 lakh unemployed youths have been given employment through providing necessary training.

Temporary employment for 55,254 youths of Kurigram, Barguna and Gopalganj districts has been created under National Service Activities. The youth is being given Tk one lakh loan without collateral from the Karmasangsthan Bank.

SEE PAGE 6 COL