

3 years of Progress



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Promoting Pro-poor Growth Success of the Present Government

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A nation requires a vision for its cherished development. The election manifesto of the present government 'Vision-2021' has been prepared with the dream of making a new Bangladesh at the outset of golden jubilee celebration of our great independence. A promise of fundamental transformation in all spheres including socio-economical and political arena has been reflected in this vision that also covers the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The present government has placed poverty alleviation and elimination of all sorts of inequity at the forefront of its

development strategy. Strengthening of social safety nets, food autarky, faster agricultural growth, employment generation etc. are identified as some of the key challenges for attaining the goals. This article focused on the initiatives taken by the present government during last three years for improvement of mass people especially on poverty alleviation, social safety nets, food security and agricultural sector.

Poverty Alleviation

Poverty eradication, the first condition for development, is the main challenge of the present government. Adam Smith in his book 'Wealth of Nations' noted, 'No society can surely be flourishing and happy of which by far the greater part of the numbers are poor and miserable'. So, undertaking of long term effective programs is required. The government has taken a strategy for combating poverty reduction both in short and long terms. In the poverty reduction strategy framework of the revised National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction II (NSAPR II), special importance has been given on creation of macroeconomic environment, identification of critical areas and essential infrastructure for pro-poor growth and social protection for the vulnerable section of the society and human resources development. During the last three years, the government had succeeded in groundbreaking for attaining the desired growth. In spite of internal and external obstacles, real GDP growth rate was 6.7 percent in FY 2010-11 which is the highest in last 40 years due to the higher growth in agriculture, manufacturing and service sector and the target for FY 2011-12 is 7.0 percent. In FY 2009-11, per capita income increased by 24 percent compared to 19 percent in the period FY 2002-04. Due to macroeconomic stability, domestic savings rate increased to 19.93 percent during the last three years against 18.77 percent in FY 2002-04. Export growth has increased to 47 percent during the last three years of the present government.

On the other hand, export growth rate was 27 percent in FY 2002-04. The rate of inward remittance was three times higher during the last three years of the present government compared to that of FY 2002-04. According to the primary report of 'Household Income and Expenditure Survey-2010', population living below the poverty line decreased to 31.5 percent in 2010 from 40.4 percent in 2005. During this period, poverty gap reduced significantly while income inequality ratio decreased moderately. The government has been increasing its revenue budget to eradicate poverty. Bangladesh has achieved significant progress in poverty reduction and targets of the MDGs. Achievement of the United Nations Award on reduction of child



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurating a 100-MW Power Plant in Siddirganj.

mortality rate is undoubtedly recognition of the success of the present government. Bangladesh is also in the right track for attaining other MDG targets including eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, women empowerment etc. In order to make the growth poor friendly and sustainable, and reach its benefit to the majority of the lower tier of the population pyramid, the most important steps taken are making the financial services accessible to the underprivileged people including extreme poor, landless, small farmers, sharecroppers, small entrepreneurs and poor women.

Social Safety Nets

Since the government believes in long term development vision, it considers social safety net programs not only as a tool of poverty reduction but also as a crisis-fighting-instrument. Microfinance is one of the important determinants for empowering poor population so that they can survive facing poverty. Growth of employment and income generating agricultural and SME sectors is speeding up the poverty eradication process and playing an important role in achieving extensive sustainable economic and social upliftment. The government is trying to empower the extreme poor by providing special grants and supports in the area of education, health, service and training to generate self-employment through microcredit facilities and to ensure food security for hardcore poor by providing food free of cost or at fair price. During the last three years, the areas of social safety net programs and allocation for it have increased.

Social safety net programs include Old Age Allowance, Widow, Divorced and Distressed Women Allowance Scheme, Allowances for the Insolvent Disabled Programme, Education Scholarship for disabled students, increase in honorarium of insolvent freedom fighter etc. 'One House One Farm' is a notable successful initiative of the government in reducing poverty. This project has been implemented in 9,640 villages of 482 upazillas. Government's housing loan scheme (Grihayan Tahbil), Returning Home Programme, microcredit for the self-employment of the women, and the rehabilitation and alternative employment programme for the beggars have been implemented with a view to eradicating poverty.

Development of Agriculture Sector

Agriculture is the prime among the priority sectors of the government. The aim of the government is to achieve self-sufficiency in food by 2013. A number of steps have been initiated for the expansion of small irrigation facilities, removal of water logging, production of improved quality and high yielding varieties of seeds and their distribution and development and expansion of the varieties of crops suitable for the weather and environment of a particular region. The highest priority has been attached to increasing the production of domestic food grains. The supply of agriculture inputs at a reasonable price is being continued with providing of subsidies.

The prices of fertilizers have been reduced thrice to keep them within the grip of purchasing power of the farmers. Taka 48.92 billion was granted as agriculture subsidy in FY 2009-10 and the allocation for agriculture subsidy was Taka 57.0 billion and Taka 45.0 billion in FY 2010-11 and 2011-12 respectively. The successful decoding of genome sequencing of jute has unfolded a new vista for further invention of new high yielding species of jute, which are expected to be salinity-resistant and tolerant to drought, insects and diseases. Along with extensive credit facilities in the agriculture sector, Bangladesh Bank has brought qualitative changes in the process of credit flow specially by strengthening monitoring activities so that the farmers can avail hassle-free credit in time in a transparent way. Disbursement of agriculture credit in FY 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12 (upto September 2011) was Taka 115.12 billion, Taka 121.84 billion and Taka 20.52 billion respectively.

The target for the current financial year is Taka 138.0 billion, which is the highest so far. A refinance scheme of Taka 5.0 billion has been launched to ensure the credit facilities for the landless sharecroppers who were otherwise deprived of institutional credit. Under this scheme, about Taka 3.1 billion was disbursed among 2,70,802 sharecroppers till date. To make the agriculture inputs available and agriculture credit disbursement easy among the farmers, 18.2 million agro-input assistance cards have been distributed across the country and savings accounts of more than 9.5 million

Three Years of Progress : Bangladesh, a Country of Immense Potential

Bangladesh is a country of immense potential. Utilising her natural and human resources, this country can very well be turned into the 'Golden Bengal', dreamt by Bangabandhu. Following the path of language movement in 1952, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman sowed the seed of independence in the mind of his people through the Six-point Movement in 1966. That very seed took a concrete shape in his 07 March Speech in 1971. Our Liberation War was directed and guided by that speech. Bangabandhu fought all his life for the people of Bangladesh. He concretized the hopes and aspirations of mass people by enshrining it in the Article 7 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh within a period of 10 months after Independence. The Article reads - "All powers in the Republic belong to the people, and their exercise on behalf of the people shall be affected only under, and by the authority of, this Constitution". He stretched his hand of friendship to the rest of the world from this war-ravished land. Very shortly, Bangladesh got recognition from 140 countries and different international organisations including the United Nations and OIC.

Under his dynamic leadership, epoch making decisions were taken to reconstruct the country. The Primary and Mass education programs were introduced at all levels, 40 thousand primary schools were nationalised, opportunity of education and employments was opened for female, education commission was constituted and country's road and highway communication was reestablished. Within a year, Chittagong, Mongla and Chalna ports were made functional by sweeping out mines and removing the sunken vessels. Hardinge Bridge, Bhairab Bridge and other numerous bridges and culverts were repaired restoring the local communication network partly. Millions of acres of coastal land were saved by building embankments along the coastal line. Parliamentary government system was established, a full-fledged voter list was developed, National Wage Board was formed, national defense system was reestablished. Kudrat-E-Khuda Education Commission was formed to formulate a technology-oriented secular education policy, a democratic ordinance was circulated for running the universities, khas land was distributed among the poor and landless farmers, land revenue with interest due to the farmers was waived. Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had implemented so many basic tasks in such a short time to build the foundation for the development of Bangladesh.

The development trend that Bangabandhu set in motion has still remained an example for the newly independent least developed nations. But unfortunately, the anti-liberation group launched propaganda in Goebbels style to bar this national progress. When bringing the patriotic countrymen from all walks of life on the same platform, the Father of the Nation was heading towards development, the anti-Bangladesh force was busy plotting against him and the Nation. On 15 August 1975, Bangabandhu was brutally killed along with his family members and with that the development of Bangladesh stopped altogether.

These beastly killers did not stop there. Even after the death of the Father of the Nation, they continued their mission of stigmatising the greatest son-of-the-soil and fabricated stories to divert the goals and objectives of our Liberation War. Their patronisers gradually spread the poison of extremism and terrorism in the country. According to their blue-print they started to attack our culture and heritage and divert the nation from its original principles. They destroyed the religious harmony that has been prevalent here for centuries. This vested quarters attacked an Awami League public meeting with very powerful military grenades on 21 August 2004 to kill the daughter of the Father of the Nation. 23 leaders and activists were killed including wife of the present President of the country Md. Zillur Rahman. Like the blue-print killing mission in December 1971 to cripple Bangladesh politically and intellectually, they once again engineered their heinous operation. The celebrated diplomat and economist, former finance minister of Awami League government AMS Kibria, Ahsanullah Master, MP, Professor Humayun Azad were killed in quick succession. Extremism flourished all over the country. Cross border consignments of heavy arms increased. All these were done in cooperation with the anti-Awami League government.

Whenever Awami League, the party of mass people, is in the government, there is development in the life of common people; the social and cultural harmony is reinstated. The budget allocation has increased even amid global recession, the national income has increased; progress has been made in basic sectors like agriculture, education and health. One of the greatest successes of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is the young generation's faith in her. They have stood beside her by being imbued of the spirit of freedom instilled by Bangabandhu. The old enemies of our Independence have become desperate to damage the image of the country once again - this time to save the war-criminals. But the days of fooling the common people are gone. Bangladesh is heading towards becoming a middle-income country before celebrating the golden jubilee of her Independence in 2021. Under the capable leadership of Sheikh Hasina, the country is put right on the track

defying the global economic crisis. Some of the successes achieved in the socio-economic and administrative sectors in the last three years of the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina are briefly described below. Soon a book will be published containing detailed information on this.

Prime Minister's Office

'District e-service centres' have enabled the people to get all the services including getting *parcha* from the district administration. All the textbooks of primary, secondary, madrasa and technical education boards have been transformed into e-books and posted on the websites in downloadable and printable formats. With an aim to providing services to the grass-root level people, Information and Service Centres have been set up in all the Union Parishads (4501) of the country. As a result, the villagers are getting multiple services like government forms, information about passport and visa, nationality certificate, results of public examinations and information on agriculture, education, health and law instantly in their villages.

About 10 thousand people have been rehabilitated through the *Asrayan* project (Phase-2). To rehabilitate about 50 thousand people under the *Asrayan-2* project, the construction work of barracks and houses in the coastal, hill-tracts and other areas has been ongoing since 2010.

US dollar 750.76 million has been invested in the EPZs over the last three years which is 31.42% higher than the previous three years. During this period, 170 entrepreneurs have been given approval for setting up industries. The scope of direct employment has been created for 88,573 Bangladeshis in these EPZs. One EPZ is being set up by a local company at Rangunia while another by a Korean company on the bank of the Karnaphuli of Chittagong. There will be IT valleys, agro-based industries, shoe industries etc. in these two EPZs creating employment opportunities for several lakhs of Bangladeshis.

4,565 industrial projects having local investment and 514 projects having joint and 100 per cent foreign investment have been registered with the Board of Investment.

This has created employment opportunity for 11,88,952 people. The NGO Bureau has disbursed taka 2,772 crore for 559 projects on education, taka 2,268 crore for 610 projects on health services, taka 1,259 crore for 498 projects on water and sanitation work and local government programs, taka 670 crore for 198 projects on agriculture, fishery and livestock, taka 924 crore for 360 projects on emergency relief and rehabilitation programs and taka 79 crore for 72 projects to intensify the use of IT technology and enhancing the IT related services.

Different socio-economic and income-generating projects have been undertaken for the socio-economic development of the ethnic groups. The projects include micro-credit scholarships for the students, academic equipment, sports and cultural equipment, sanitary latrines and tube-wells, community centers and construction of religious institutes.

It has enabled about 50 thousand members of the ethnic group to change their socio-economic conditions. Policy and strategies have been formulated to implement the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) initiatives, and within this a total of three guidelines have been issued in the form of notification.

In order to establish the Economic Zone in the country, the Bangladesh Economic Zone Act, 2010 has been passed and the Bangladesh Economic Zone Authority has been established.

Cabinet Division

There have been 863 decisions taken in the Cabinet meetings held till 30 November 2011 out of which 767 have been implemented taking the secretarial help of the Cabinet Division. A total of 29 policies/strategies have been approved and circulated and 68 proposals for bilateral and international agreements, memorandum of understanding and ratifications have been approved. 21 celebrated personalities and 3 institutes have been given the Independence Award. Late Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi has been awarded the Bangladesh Freedom Honour (Posthumous) in recognition of her great

role and contribution to Bangladesh's independence. Rangpur has been declared a Division and Bijoy Nagar of Bramhanbaria and Rangabali of Potuakhali have been declared new *upazillas* (sub-division). Food Department and Disaster Management and Relief Department have been established under the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management. Law and Justice Division and Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division under the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Banking Division under the Ministry of Finance, and Statistics Division under the Ministry of Planning have been formed. A new ministry named Ministry of Railway has been established. Science and Technology Division and Information and Communication Technology Division have been bifurcated into the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology respectively. "Responsibilities and Assignments of the Deputy Commissioners, 2011" have been circulated.

Ministry of Public Administration

Ministry of Public Administration has made considerable progress in various fields like formulating the Civil Service Act, amending the Promotion Policy, formulating Posting and Transfer Policy, reforming field level administrative structure, clustering the ministries as a part of administrative reform. 4,302 officers have been given training in 67 training courses at BPATC, BCS Administration Academy and BIAM Foundation. Keeping pace with the government's digitisation program, there has been progress in initiating e-filing project. 3,663 BCS cadre officers have been recruited. 77,960 posts have been created in different ministries. Government servants' retirement age has been increased to 59 years.

Ministry of Finance

National Pay Scale 2009 has been made effective. All Ministries/Divisions and other institutions have been brought under the coverage of Medium Term Budget Framework (5 years). Budget Management Act 2009 has been made effective. Effective measures have been taken to implement the Public Private Partnership (PPP) programme. The average GDP growth has reached 6.2% and per capita national income has increased to 10.4%. The average growth over the last three years is 18.6% including the 41.5% export income growth in the fiscal year 2010-11. To ensure quick industrialization, Bangladesh Development Bank has been established merging the Industrial Bank and the Industry Loan Institution. To help the workers, willing to go overseas, Expatriate Welfare Bank has been established. Insurance Act 2010, Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority Act 2010 have come into effect; money laundering law has been updated and initiative has been taken to introduce food grain insurance. The average growth of revenue collection has reached 18.8% and gross revenue collection growth has reached 15.7% till September 2011 as the revenue collection management and revenue authority have been made more people-friendly.

Ministry of Planning

The Sixth Five-Year Plan has been finalised in the light of the government's long-term development plan and has been approved by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC). The specific objectives of this plan are to increase the national growth to 8%, to reduce poverty margin to 29%, to increase the per capita income to 1,000 US dollars, to increase the literacy rate to 100% and to achieve self-sufficiency in food and to create social safety net for the poor people. 619 development projects of an estimated cost of taka 3,29,508.30 crore have been approved. 184 projects of an estimated cost of taka 3,116.93 crore have been approved. The percentage of ADP implementation is 92 in the fiscal year 2010-11.

Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs

Till November 2011, a total of 33,000 poor people have been provided with legal aid at government cost. The construction of five district registry office buildings and nine sub-registry office buildings have been completed. 90% of the construction work of the Dhaka Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court building and the construction of the Police Custody cum Police Barrack has been completed. A complete model of legal aid program has been introduced to several districts. For settling the cases in the shortest possible time, 55 judges have been appointed at the High Court while 215 officers have been recruited in the vacant posts of Assistant Judge and Judicial Magistrate at the subordinate courts. The Constitution has been printed following the 15th amendment.

Ministry of Agriculture

Within only six days after assuming the power, the present Government reduced the price of urea fertiliser. For the first time about 14 million farmers have been issued agricultural equipment aid card through which nine million bank accounts have been opened and financial aids have been given to the farmers. In the last two fiscal years, huge volume of fertilisers costing Taka 61 crore has been distributed among the farmers as an incentive for cultivating the *ash* crop. Fertilisers and seeds costing 48 crore taka have been distributed among the affected farmers of the *haor* areas. Similarly, a fund of 6.5 crore taka has been allocated for 50 thousand farmers as incentive for cultivating the corn. Taka 32 crore has been granted to the Aila and other natural disasters affected farmers under the agriculture rehabilitation programme.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina receiving South-South Award from ITU Secretary General.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurating National Immunization Day.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurating ICC World Cup-2011 in Dhaka.