



Preserving Biodiversity out the 'National Bio-Safety Framework' and its implementation is in progress. We have been working on formulating separate legal framework to ensure biodiversity and safety. Besides, actions are underway in the coastal areas and wetlands like Cox's Bazar, St. Martin's Islands and *Hakaluki haor* to preserve biodiversity, enable its effective management and sustained utilisation.

177. Bangladesh is extremely concerned about the protection and development of environment. Therefore, this issue has become central to our overall planning process. Different ministries like Ministry of Forest and Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources and Ministry of Land have their own environment agenda. Our aim is to prepare an integrated master plan encompassing all the environment related projects of different ministries to be implemented under a comprehensive programme on environment and climate change. I hope this master plan will be prepared by next year and the development partners will come forward with support.

(VII) Digital Bangladesh

Mr. Speaker

178. The entire nation has shown solidarity with the Hon'ble Prime Minister's dream of establishing a 'Digital Bangladesh'. To fulfill this dream, we are attaching equal importance to establishing e-Governance including e-Services, e-Education and e-Commerce. We have established a new ministry namely 'Ministry of Information and Communication Technology'. ICT will be the principal means of transforming Bangladesh into a middle income country by 2021.

Information Technology Services

179. The Hon'ble prime Minister has been honoured with the South-South Award for her path breaking contribution to the improvement of the living standard of women and children through the use of ICT. Union **e-Service for Marginal People** Information and Service Centres have been established in 4,501 unions to provide information and services to people living in remote areas. People are already reaping benefits of this initiative. About 40 lakh people on a monthly basis receive services from these centres. This has enhanced transparency and accountability of field administration.

180. In my 2009-10 budget speech, I made a commitment to introduce e-Governance by 2014. All ministries/divisions, directorates and departments have established their own websites which they update regularly. As committed, E-Tendering and e-GP (Electronic Government Procurement) have been introduced in government offices on a pilot basis. Now, people can easily access all government gazettes, necessary forms, circulars/rules and other government publications through internet. Side by side, initiatives have been taken to create national e-Governance architecture under the A21 programme to develop appropriate information management framework at national level.

181. We pledged to commence e-Commerce by 2012. We have completed all the preparations for introducing electronic/digital signature necessary for secured exchange of online information. Office of the Controller of Certifying Authority has also been established for issuance of electronic certificates. Besides, we have taken effective steps to establish e-Payment gateway leading to introduction of e-Commerce. Hopefully, we will be able to achieve this target.

182. Cash card and mobile money order services have been introduced in the country by using postal services. Steps have been taken to convert 8,000 village post offices and 500 upazila post offices into 'e-Centres'.

183. We have formulated the National ICT Policy to develop and expand information technology related services. Under this policy, as many as 306 action items are being implemented over short, medium and long term. We have reduced the telephone and internet call charges significantly. As a result, the quality and coverage of these services are increasing rapidly. The number of telephone users has increased to about 8.8 crore. At present, tele-density in the country is 61 percent and internet density is 21.3 percent. An initiative has been taken to enhance the submarine cable bandwidth capacity from 44.6 to 160 Gbps (Gigabit per second). The charge for bandwidth usage has been reduced to one third. Although, Bangla ranks 6th amongst the world languages in terms of population, the size of the Bangla web content is only 0.5 percent. We plan to increase the use of Bangla on the web. To this end, all district information windows, websites and national e-Database have been developed in Bangla. In order to increase e-Literacy, as many as 40,000 officers/staff of district and upazila level have received training. Around 5,000 portals have been established at district, upazila and union levels. In addition, by June 2013, multimedia class rooms will be installed in 20,500 educational institutions across the country.

184. In order to get connected with the 2nd submarine cable, Bangladesh has joined the SEA- ME-WE-5 consortium. Two companies have been awarded with WiMAX (Worldwide Interoperability Microwave Access) licenses to take broadband facility to the village level. 7 Divisional towns, 46 districts and 36 upazilas have been brought under optical fibre network. Installation of this network in 1000 unions is also underway. Up to now, 400 upazilas including 25 inaccessible hilly upazilas have been brought under Teletalk network. 448 upazilas will hopefully be brought

Expansion of Internet and Telecom Services

under Teletalk network by June, 2012. Currently, installation of 3G technology and extension of existing 2.5G network through Teletalk is in progress.

Digital Infrastructure

185. Six private organizations have been awarded with ITC (International Terrestrial Cables) licenses to make international telecommunication interminable. All necessary formalities have been completed by another 22, 18 and 33 organizations to receive IGW (International Gateway), ICX (International Exchange) and IIG (International Internet Gateway) licenses, respectively. Out of 482 Upazilas in the country, digital telephone exchange has been established in 455 Upazilas. By June 30, 2012, new digital exchanges will be established in 20 out of 22 Upazilas of 3 hill-districts. Apart from this, all the Upazilas across the country has been brought under mobile internet network.

Telecommunication Infrastructure

186. A 'Central Information Centre' has been established in Bangladesh Computer Council. Bangladesh National Data Center has been internationally recognized as a data centre containing three layers of security. We have taken steps to build nationwide regional information highway. Hopefully, installation of 55 kilometer long optical fibre cable from *Panchaghar* to *Banglabandha* will be completed by June 2013. Information highway infrastructure to connect with India, Nepal, and Bhutan will be built. Besides, an initiative has been taken to construct 'National E-governance Architecture' under the programme of 'Support to Digital Bangladesh' with a view to establishing the targeted framework of information management at the national level.

Regional Information Highway

187. Building a Hi-Tech Park at Kaliakoir, Gazipur and a software technology park at Janata Tower to create a world class investment environment for promoting Hi-Tech industry are in progress. ICT Incubator programme is ongoing and steps have been taken to establish technology parks in all divisional towns including Dhaka.

Technology Park

188. Because of our sincere efforts, Bangladesh has recently been branded by the international ICT community as an outsourcing destination. Through outsourcing, employment has been generated for about 10,000 youth having ICT experience. They have earned approximately US\$ 10 million. Income of the software industry has increased from US\$ 35 million of previous year to US\$ 46 million in FY2010-11.

Recognition as an Outsourcing Destination

189. I expressed my optimism that each year 4,000 computer engineers and scientists will be produced in the country. Presently, as many as 5,000 computer engineers and scientists are graduating each year from different institutions. Steps have been taken for manufacturing and marketing of mobile phones and laptops in the local market. Commercial production of optical fibre cable has also been started.

Producing Expert Professionals

190. Along with the budget documents of last year, I placed before this august House a booklet titled 'Progressing Towards Digital Bangladesh'. This year, I am presenting an updated version of that booklet. This will apprise the nation of our various programmes, their progress and future plans. After a while, I would present a brief statement on the issues of land management digitization as outlined in this booklet.

Chapter VII Public Welfare

Poverty Alleviation and Social Security

Mr. Speaker

191. I mentioned at the outset of the budget speech like the previous budget speeches - we are striving to build a happy, prosperous and caring Bangladesh free from hunger and poverty. This is my as well as our Government's ambition and now it has become an aspiration of the whole nation. To this end, we have been working relentlessly, have formulated policies accordingly, allocated resources to relevant programmes and continued this trend in the next year too. As part of comprehensive efforts, we put emphasis on infrastructure as well as human resources sector. Special importance was attached to digitising the country. At the same time, our efforts to reduce regional disparity remained uninterrupted. We have continuously striving to lift all the people out of poverty who is living below the poverty line. Along with ensuring their social security, we want to empower this destitute population as well. Our aim is to enhance their strengths and capacity so that they can free themselves from the shackles of poverty.

Social Empowerment

192. Incidence of poverty and disparity has been reduced and wage of labour has increased as a consequence of our different social security and social empowerment interventions. According to 'Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2010', poverty head count ratio has reduced from earlier 41.0 percent to 31.5 percent. Already, we have brought 30.1 percent of rural and about 25.3 percent of all the families of the country under the coverage of social safety net programmes.

193. At the same time, according to our earlier commitments, we have taken steps to ensure proper use of public money by avoiding duplication of social safety net programmes. In this connection, the citizen core data structure has been finalised. Steps have been taken to form national population register and database for the hardcore poor. The scope of micro credit schemes has been widened. Besides, as indicated in our earlier

Citizen Core Data Structure

commitment in the previous budget, a 'Pension Insurance Scheme' is being piloted in the sadar upazila of Nilphamari district.

194. Now, I am highlighting the scope of various allowance schemes and allocation for this sector in FY2012-13:

- ⊙ I propose to allocate Tk. 360 crore as insolvent freedom fighters allowance for 1,50,000 beneficiaries
- ⊙ The number of beneficiary for Maternity Allowance was 60,000 in FY2008-09. I propose to raise the number to 1,01,200 and allocate Tk. 42.50 lakh for them in FY2012-13
- ⊙ As many as 77,600 working mothers of 61 district headquarters and female RMG workers of Dhaka, Narayanganj and Gazipur are receiving Poor Lactating Mothers' allowance at the rate of Tk. 350 per month. I propose to include another 78,000 mothers under this programme in FY2012-13
- ⊙ I propose to allocate Tk. 891 crore for 24,75,000 beneficiaries of Old Age allowance
- ⊙ I propose to allocate Tk. 331.20 crore for 9,20,000 widows and divorced/abandoned women receiving allowance at the rate of Tk. 300 per month
- ⊙ As many as 7,50,000 women are receiving monthly 30 kg of food grains, in total 2,71,000 MT under VGD programme. I propose to continue this programme in the next fiscal year
- ⊙ I propose to increase the number of VGF cards from 3.11 crore to 3.42 crore
- ⊙ I propose to allocate a total of Tk. 14.61 crore for the backward Dalit, Harijon, gypsy and eunuch communities.

Different Types of Allowances

195. The monthly per head subsistence allowance for children of public orphanages has been increased from Tk. 500 to Tk. 2000. I propose to allocate Tk. 28.50 crore to this sector in FY2012-13. Moreover, I propose to allocate a total of Tk. 66 crore for children of private orphanages where each child will receive Tk. 1,000 monthly.

Welfare of Orphans

196. The present Government is committed to ensure overall development of the physically and mentally challenged community. We believe, in order for mainstreaming them, this neglected section of the society should be brought under the social safety net coverage. For this purpose, initially we need accurate data on the disabled and autistic population. We have undertaken a survey to this end. Now, budget allocation in the form of financial support for education of the disabled people is provided under the Ministry of Social Welfare. This allocation will continue to be made against this ministry. However, responsibility of programme administration will lie with the Ministry of Education.

Survey on the Physically and Mentally Challenged

197. According to available statistics, the total number of autistic children is about 1.5 lakh. An 'Autism Resource Centre' has been established in Mirpur, Dhaka to create social awareness on autism. Presently, the construction work for building a park at the premises of 'Autism Resource Centre' is in progress. Moreover, the guardians of autistic children are receiving training on a regular basis. We have opened a full free autistic school in 2011. Its coverage will be further expanded, InshAllah.

Autism

198. Around 20,000 physically and mentally challenged persons have received medical treatment from mobile 'One Stop Physiotherapy Unit' established in different parts of the country. We have established 35 'Disabled Service and Assistance Centres' in 34 districts. I am proposing to establish 30 more centres in the next fiscal year. Besides, the disabled students are receiving stipends. I propose to allocate Tk. 170 crore in FY2012-13 for different schemes undertaken for the welfare of the disabled population.

Welfare of the Physically and Mentally Challenged

199. I announced in my previous budget speech that we would take initiatives to eradicate begging as a profession. Accordingly, a survey has already been conducted on 10,000 beggars in the Dhaka city. Among them, 2,000 beggars are going to be rehabilitated in Mymensingh, Barisal, Dhaka and Jamalpur districts. I propose to allocate Tk. 10 crore in this sector for FY2012-13.

Rehabilitation of Beggars

200. With a view to alleviating poverty, the project titled 'One House, One Farm' is being implemented in 17,388 villages of 64 districts. This project has directly benefited 10,38,000 families. As many as 1,09,000 families have been rehabilitated in two phases under 'Ashrayan' project undertaken in 1997. Moreover, approximately 9,000 families have been rehabilitated by building pucca houses for homeless people of the coastal regions. I propose to allocate Tk. 650 crore for these two schemes in FY2012-13.

Rehabilitation of Hardcore Poor

201. In continuation of past years' interventions, we want to carry on with the self-employment generation scheme for the hardcore poor in the next fiscal year. This scheme is not only reducing their poverty but also building capacity of the poor. Side by side, small rural infrastructure is being built by their labour for their own welfare. I propose to allocate Tk. 1,200 crore for implementation of the self-employment generation scheme for the hardcore poor in the next fiscal year.

Employment of Hardcore Poor