



The use of solar power can help people save energy for the future.

202. Micro credit is playing a vital role in empowering the poor by increasing their income. In addition to creating opportunities for self-employment, micro credit is keeping the wheels of the rural economy by injecting money supply to the rural areas. The different ministries/divisions/agencies of the government distribute approximately Tk. 2,002 crore as micro credit every year. Beside the government, different NGOs including PKSF, BRAC, Grameen Bank, ASA, Proshika, Shakti Foundation and TMSS are pursuing micro credit programmes. All these NGOs together disburse Tk. 31,343 crore as micro credit annually. On the whole, around Tk. 33,345 crore is being channeled into Bangladesh economy as micro credit.

203. I would like to allocate Tk. 22,750 crore in FY2012-13 for all the programmes to be implemented under the social security and empowerment schemes.

Employment Generation

Mr. Speaker

204. I talked about inclusive growth in my previous three budget speeches. I made a promise to bring down both income and human poverty to a minimum level. To implement this pledge, we took initiatives to increase employment opportunities for our people from the beginning. For this purpose, we laid emphasis on agriculture and rural development. We took steps to provide training to the youth and create overseas employment opportunities for them as well. We have begun formulating action plans under this policy. Initiatives for the expansion of small and medium industries have been undertaken. To this end, we have expanded the credit programmes. Besides, we have taken steps to set up labour intensive industries. During the past three years, our initiatives, directly or indirectly, contributed to generating employment for a huge number of unemployed people. Side by side, a significant number of employment opportunities were also created in the private sector.

205. Alongside generating employment opportunities, we have also taken necessary steps to create skilled manpower as per our election pledges. We believe that skill development leads to increase in income and improvement of living standards. For this reason, we have taken a number of steps to generate better employment for all. We have formulated the National Skill Development Policy, 2011, begun formulating action plans under this policy and established Cabinet Committee on Skill Development, Manpower Export and Remittance. The National Skill Development Council Secretariat has been established. There is a plan to gradually strengthen the council. In this initiative, we would like to engage everyone including the private sector and the NGOs. We would also like to ensure inter-ministerial coordination on this issue under the guidance of the cabinet. In order to further accelerate the implementation of skill development programme, I propose to keep aside, for the time being, an amount of Tk. 50 crore under the budget allocation for Finance Division. Meanwhile, an endowment fund of Tk. 140 crore has been created under the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment to provide training to the people aspiring for overseas employment. Income of Tk. 16 crore accrues to this fund annually.

206. According to the latest data, the number of unemployed population above 15 years is 26 lakh. About 13.4 lakh people enter the job market every year. In the past three years, an estimated total of 17.57 crore man months of employment have been created under various government programmes. Moreover, 1.99 lakh people have been directly recruited to various posts in different government offices from 2009 to December 2011. Under various government programmes, we have set a target of creating an estimated total of 597.13 lakh man months of employment in FY2012-13.

Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment

Mr. Speaker

207. Remittance inflow is particularly important for our economy. We, therefore, have identified manpower export as one of the priority sectors. In my previous three budget speeches, I pledged to take necessary steps to develop this sector. One of our pledges - the 'Expatriate Welfare Bank' has already been made operational. This bank is extending 'Immigration Loan' to those who like to go abroad and 'Rehabilitation Loan' to the ones returning home.

208. We are actively pursuing the issue of exploring new labour markets in addition to the existing ones. As a result, manpower export has begun to countries like Poland, Papua New Guinea, Algeria, South Africa, Angola and Congo. We are taking steps to expand labour markets in different regions of the world including the continents of America and Africa. Considerable progress has been made in opening up the Malaysian labour market which remained closed till now. The legalization of around three lakh Bangladeshi immigrants, staying illegally in Malaysia, is nearly completed. We have increased the manpower of labour wings in our missions abroad. Besides, we have opened new labour wings in three Bangladesh missions abroad. Through these collective efforts, overseas employment has been generated for 14.33 lakh Bangladeshi workers in the last three years. Last year, we repatriated all Bangladeshi workers who were affected by the political turmoil in Libya. Cash assistance at the rate of Tk. 50,000 per head has been provided to rehabilitate 36,656 affected persons.

209. Our aim is to increase manpower export and the flow of remittance by developing skills of Bangladeshi citizens. To this end, remittance houses are being opened in Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Kuwait, Abu Dhabi, Oman and Los Angeles. At the same time, we want to channel worker's remittances more into investment. A cabinet committee has been formed to carry out regular review of different initiatives and programmes undertaken in this connection.

210. To provide the expatriates with voting rights as promised earlier, we have approved the Voter List Amendment Act 2010. Steps have been taken to automate the immigration process. Using Smart Card with 'Biometric Finger Print' sensor, immigration clearance certificate is being issued to every worker going abroad. Online VISA verification and issuance of registration permit has begun. Registration through mobile phones is also being ensured. I firmly believe that all these initiatives will establish discipline and good governance in manpower export.

Women and Children Welfare

Mr. Speaker

211. More than half of the population of this country is women. Without women development holistic development of the country would remain a distant reality. Therefore, immediately after forming the government, we adopted 'women empowerment' as a priority agenda. The government has already formulated a time-befitting 'Women Development Policy'. Side by side, to ensure women's share in national budget, we formulated gender budget for 4 ministries in FY2009-10. In

continuation, I am presenting gender budget for 25 ministries this year before this august House. Besides, 'The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act-2010' has been enacted to prevent violence against women. The draft Hindu Marriage Registration Act 2012 framed for protecting the rights of Hindu women has received the nod of the cabinet. We have taken a wide range of steps to prevent all forms of social crimes against women including eve-teasing. The duration of maternity leave has been extended from four to six months keeping in mind the welfare of the new-born as well as the mother.

212. Participation of women in all sectors including the judiciary, the executive and the legislative organs of the state has been ensured. The number of reserved seats for women in the parliament has been raised to 50. A legal provision has been made to include three elected women representatives in each union parishad. These steps have been also been acclaimed by the international community. According to the World Economic Forum's ranking Bangladesh has achieved 11th position amongst 134 countries of the world in terms of 'Political Empowerment of Women'.

213. Different types of training are being imparted for the development of women's skills and entrepreneurship, and ensuring wide participation in the labour market and economic empowerment. Implementation of a project worth Tk. 223.33 crore is underway to engage 80,000 ultra-poor women and marginalized farmers of three northern districts of the country in income generating activities. Moreover, 'Joyeeta Bironi Kendra' has been launched for display and sale of products of cooperative societies registered with the Department of Women Affairs. Steps have been taken to construct new hostels to ensure housing facility for the working women. For the benefit of the working women, 42 day care centres have been established in 5 divisional towns and 13 district headquarters including Dhaka.

214. We have already formulated the 'National Child Labour Elimination Policy-2010' and 'National Child Policy-2011'. As many as 1,66,000 children have been taken out of hazardous professions and brought under primary education programme. Two lakh children of 4-6 years of age have been brought under the pre-primary education scheme. 'Shishu Bikash Kendra' has been established in 6 big districts to rehabilitate street-children into safe and normal life. A National Coordination Committee has been formed to prevent women and child trafficking. Besides, surveillance of law enforcing agencies at all trafficking-prone points has been further strengthened. However, we have not been able to commence an integrated development programme for the girl child as promised in the previous budget. Hopefully, we will be able to take up this programme next fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker

Welfare of Freedom Fighters

215. One of the main objectives of our government is to ensure overall welfare of the freedom fighters, the great sons of the soil. In the previous three budgets, I expressed my firm commitment to adopt effective steps for overall welfare of the freedom fighters as well as for preserving the history and memories of our great liberation war. Accordingly, we have restarted the construction of 'Swadhinata Stambho' at Suhrawardy Udyan. Construction of a building for the 'Muktijoddha Jadughar' has also begun. Besides, we have taken initiatives to pay homage to distinguished citizens and organizations of different countries to acknowledge their contribution to the glorious liberation war. We have so far honoured 83 persons and organisations including the former Indian Prime Minister late Indira Gandhi. Cataloguing the names of foreign friends who contributed to our liberation war will be an ongoing process.

216. The programmes for providing allowances and ration to the families of martyred freedom fighters as well as the insolvent and war-wounded ones are continuing. Side by side, we have formulated a policy on providing overseas medical treatment to war wounded freedom fighters. Under this policy, a freedom fighter will be eligible to receive financial assistance up to a predetermined ceiling for overseas treatment. In my previous budget speeches, I promised to grant the privilege of free traveling on trains, buses and launches to the freedom fighters of 65 years age and above as respected citizens. We have not yet been successful on this count. However, we are actively working on this issue.

217. As many as 2,971 residential units are being built for the insolvent and landless freedom fighters. We have also taken steps to build multi-storied buildings for the families of war-wounded and martyred freedom fighters on different abandoned properties under public-private partnership programmes. Moreover, construction of a residential-cum-commercial building for the freedom fighters in Mohammadpur, Dhaka is in progress.

Minority and Underprivileged Community

Mr. Speaker

218. Our Government is strongly committed to protect the interests and ensure overall development of the minority communities including the ethnic minorities of the country. We are working to preserve and protect all the rights and privileges they are entitled to enjoy as a citizen of the country. Meanwhile, a 'Treaty Implementation Committee' has been

Micro Credit

Widening the Scope of Women's Participation

Expansion of Women's Employment Opportunity

Children Welfare

Expatriate Welfare Bank

Expansion of Labour Market

Expansion of Employment Opportunities

Skill Development

Preserving Memories of Liberation War

Allowance, Ration and Medical Facility for Freedom Fighters

Expatriate Voting Right and Automated Emigration Process

Housing for the Freedom Fighters

Ensuring Women Rights

Protecting Interest of Ethnic Minorities