



Special Supplement

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## Bangladesh Development Surprise: 2009-2020

Dr. Shamsul Alam

Economy of Bangladesh is rising. The rise is unprecedented and surprising. Probably, no other country's story of success has been subject to so wider discussion in international arena, than that of Bangladesh during the last decade. Recently, the issue has shined in the headlines following a report by International Monetary Fund (IMF). The report says, Bangladesh will overtake India in terms of per capita GDP in December, 2020. Due to Corona pandemic, per capita GDP of India will be shrunk by 10.3 percent to 1877 US\$ while Bangladesh will achieve a 4 percent rise of GDP to 1888 US\$. The fact is even couple of years before; per capita income of India was significantly higher than that of Bangladesh. Per capita income of Bangladesh has more than tripled since 2009. An estimate by Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corporation reports, Bangladesh will be among 26th largest economy by 2030. Centre for Economics and Business Research of the UK projected Bangladesh will become 25th largest economy in the world by 2035. In 2018, Bangladesh has earned praise from its global peers after meeting all criteria for graduation from Least Developed Country status to a developing country. As of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, graduation to Developing country from Least Developed Country will elevate the prestige of Bangladesh. It will raise the confidence and strength level of political leaders. Bangladesh's success in social indicators such as education, health, infant mortality, life expectancy along with economic indicators, has been remarkable. Through launching of Bangabandhu satellite, Bangladesh entered into a new era of communication technologies. So what are the underlying factors that have driven this success we may focus into?



Awarding of 'Vaccine Hero Award' by Global Alliance for Vaccination And Immunization

### Visionary leadership and the charter of change

The present government came in power after winning a landslide victory in 2008 election with election manifesto of "Charter for Change". That manifesto indeed laid foundation for the Vision 2021 or Digital Bangladesh. The government started journey at a time when both economic and political situations were abysmal. There was widespread prevalence of terrorism, corruption, inefficiency, mismanagement. Further, power sector was mired in extreme deficiency, and health, education, agriculture and transport sector were stuck in sluggishness. The government formulated first perspective Plan 2010-2021 of Bangladesh with the aim to eradicate hunger, poverty, illiteracy. Priorities of the government in that time was attaining Economic Stability and curbing inflation, effective action against corruption, ensuring economic usage of oil, gas, coal, hydro power, wind power and solar energy, elimination of poverty and inequity, establishment of good governance. Digital Bangladesh was built on four pillars -digital government, human resource development, development of ICT and promotion of industry and connecting citizens. The philosophy underlying the vision 2021 includes improving the lives of people by ensuring democracy, people's right, transparency, accountability, ensuring delivery of government services to the citizen's doorsteps. With deft and visionary leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Digital Bangladesh is now a reality, not a utopia.

### Success in MDGs

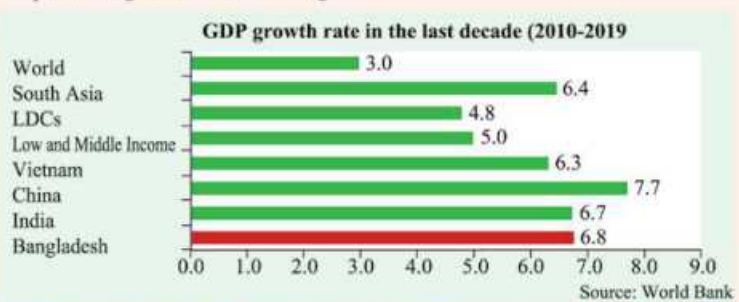
The last decade has been unforgettable for Bangladesh awarded with number of international accolades and praises. Among all of those, successes in MDGs remained the most glowing. As an individual, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina prided the country by receiving numerous awards from countries and international organizations. Bangladesh was accorded first award on MDGs for reducing child mortality from UNDP in 2010. The next year, International telecommunication Union, UN Economic Commission together conferred Bangladesh with the South-South Award. Other important awards include United Nations World Food Organization's (FAO) Diploma Award in 2013 for reducing poverty and malnutrition, South-South Award for ensuring food security and reducing poverty, ICT Sustainable Development Award in 2015, UN Environment Award, Planet 50:50, from UN Women Agent of Change, Global Women Leadership Award by World Summit of Women in 2018 for Women leadership. Other achievements for the Prime Minister are the International Achievement Award and Special Distinct Award for Leadership from IPS International in 2018, Vaccine Hero by Global Alliance for Vaccine and Immunization (GAVI) in 2019, Champion for Skill Development for Youth from UNICEF in 2019. Bangladesh received the prestigious UN public Service Award 2020 for promotion of transparent and accountable government institutions in 2020. It is a long list indeed for the last decade. This paves the way for the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (2016-2030).

### Middle Income country and graduation from LDC to a Developing Country

2021 will be the year of the golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence. Vision 2021 is prepared bearing in mind the milestone targets to be attained by 2021. The main goal of the Vision 2021 was to make Bangladesh a middle income country by 2021. Countries are classified into four categories by income according to World Bank Classification as lower income country, lower middle income country, upper middle income country, high income country. Bangladesh crossed the threshold of lower middle income country in 2015. Bangladesh attained another glaring success by meeting all criteria for graduation from LDC status to a developing country by UN, CDP (Committee for Development Policy). Three conditions are to cross threshold of per capita income, human asset index and economic vulnerability. Very recent update from UN shows Bangladesh is most likely to meet all criteria for the second time in February 2021 again. As a result, Bangladesh will be considered a developing country in 2024. Mainly, the above two glaring successes boost the confidence of policy makers to devise a plan for Vision 2041, the broad goals of which are to become an upper middle income country by 2031 and a high income country by 2041.

### Progress in socio-economic indicators

As like of economic progress, progress in social indicators have also been in similar pace. In the last decade, Bangladesh stands second in terms of GDP growth rate in the world. Bangladesh even left behind India in GDP growth rate. Recently foreign reserve risen all time high to 43 billion US dollar, which was just 7.5 billion US dollar in 2007. Other important factor of the economy, remittance increased to 21.7 billion US dollar in 2019-20 from merely 9.7 billion dollars in 2009. The following bar chart depicts a comparison of growth rate across the globe:



Source: World Bank



Visit to Kutupalong Rohingya camp



Launching of 'Mujib Borsho' Logo

Since 2009, foreign direct investment increased five times. This will be even accelerated further, if 100 economic zones many of which are under construction and when fully operationalized. In the meantime, some of works already been completed and the flow of investment started poured in. Investors from China, India, Singapore, Japan, and Korea are showing great interest in Bangladesh. Further, mega projects if completed will facilitate buoyant economic activities. The biggest underlying strength of Bangladesh economy is domestic consumption. The market for 165 million people is huge. Perspective Plan 2021-2041 projects foreign direct investment to be around 3 percent of GDP. One of the targets of Vision 2021 was to be self-sufficient in food grain production by 2012. Bangladesh already achieved self-sufficiency in food grain. One of the successes of Bangladesh is more than tripling rice production since Independence.

Paddy Production (in million metric ton)



Source: World Bank

The last decade is also characterized by success of poverty reduction. According to BBS estimate, each year on an average poverty has been reduced by one percentage point in the last decade. Extreme poverty also declined by around one percentage point. World Bank estimate



Cheques of financial assistance are being given to the Journalists

shows the incidence of poverty by 1.90 dollar PPP per person fell down to 9.2 percent in 2019 from 14.8 percent in 2016. Commendable progress is also made in reducing malnutrition. Rate of malnutrition fell to 13 percent in 2017-2019 (3 years average) from 16.6 percent in 2008-2010. Gross enrollment rate in the secondary schools increased to 72.6 percent in 2019 from merely 48.8 percent in 2009.

Social progress has been attained mainly by reduction in maternal mortality, reduction in infant mortality, neonatal mortality, under-5 mortality. The following table shows the change in the last decade:

Year	Maternal mortality (per 100000 live birth)	Neo natal mortality (per 1000 live birth)	Infant mortality (per 1000 live birth)	Infant mortality (per 1000 live birth)
2009	259	28	39	50
2019	165	15	21	28

Source: BBS

Neo natal mortality rate, Infant mortality rate, Under 5 mortality rate were made possible to reduce by half in the last decade. Inclusive growth requires massive investment in health, education, social protection, infrastructure and research which drew high attention of the Government during the last decade. Along with improving business environment, private investment will be encouraged to generate employment. The government is now eyeing on building knowledge based society, curbing corruption, employment generation as part of implementing Vision 2041.

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## Some comparative facts of development and success achieved under leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

Success/achievement	During the period of Bangladesh Awami League (2009-2020)	2006
National Budget	National budget amounting to Tk. 5 lakh 68 thousand crore for the fiscal year 2020-21 adopted.	Budget was only Tk. 61 thousand 6 crore.
GDP Growth Rate	GDP growth rate was achieved above 8 percent during last two consecutive fiscal years. It was increased to 8.15 percent in 2018-19. Even amid corona virus pandemic, 5.24 percent GDP growth rate was achieved.	Growth rate was 5.04 percent.
GDP Size	The size of GDP of Bangladesh at present is Tk. 28 lakh crore.	It was Tk. 4 crore 82 lakh.
Per Capita Income	Per capita income at present is US\$ 2065.	Only US\$ 543.
Remittance Income	Remittance income US\$ 21.74 billion in 2020.	US\$ 4.8 billion.
Export Income	Export income US\$ 48 billion (including service sectors).	US\$ 10.52 billion.
Foreign Exchange Reserve	Foreign exchange reserve US\$ 43 billion.	US\$ 3.5 billion.
Poverty Rate	Poverty rate declined to below 20 and ultra-poverty rate 10 percent.	It was 41.5 and 24.2 percent respectively.
Winning Maritime Boundary	Bangladesh established its right on the maritime area of 1 lakh 11 thousand 631 sq. km. from Myanmar and 19 thousand 467 sq. km. from India through international court.	There was no initiative in this regard.
Padma Bridge	The complete structure of Padma Bridge, dream of Bangladeshi nation, is now visible. On the completion of the 6.15 Km. long bridge, GDP will increase at the rate of 1.5 percent.	Various conspiracies involving all-out efforts were made to halt the Padma Bridge Project.
Metro Rail	The construction work of 20 km long metro rail from Uttara to Bangladesh Bank is progressing fast.	There was no concept or initiative of metro rail.
Karnaphuli Tunnel	The construction work of 3.4 km. long tunnel under the river Karnaphuli is advancing fast.	There was no idea or initiative.
Payra Seaport	The operational activities in the Payra Seaport, third seaport of the country, is going on since 2016. Till date, the government earned Tk. 236 crore through the completion of operational activities of 104 foreign commercial vessels.	No initiative was taken to build the port.
Matarbari Deep Seaport	Construction work of deep seaport at Matarbari in Cox's Bazar is progressing fast. MV 'Venus Triumph' carrying the flag of Panama, as the first vessel, anchored in this port on 29 December 2020.	No initiative was taken to build port.
Social Security Programme	Total budget allocation in the fiscal 2020-21 is Tk. 95 thousand 574 crore. At present, 1 crore 20 lakh people are getting various allowances of 145 programs.	Only Tk. 373 crore was allocated in the social safety sector.
Free Textbooks Distribution	A total of 366 crore free textbooks were distributed among the students since the formation of the government in 2009.	Free textbooks never distributed.
Educational Institution Nationalization	26 thousand 193 primary schools were nationalized. And the job of 1 lakh 42 thousand teachers of these primary schools were also nationalized.	There was no initiative for the nationalization of educational institutions.
Houses Awarded to the Poor	8 lakh 82 thousand houseless families will be provided with shelter during the Mujib birth centenary.	There was no such initiative.
Literacy Rate	At present, the rate of literacy elevated to 74 percent. Rate of primary level school enrollment is about 100 percent.	Rate of literacy decreased to 44 from 65 percent.
Number of Internet and Mobile Phone	At present, the number of users of internet is over 11 crore and that of mobile SIM is about 16 crore and 71 lakh.	It was only 35 lakh and that of mobile SIM was 2 crore 18 lakh.
Digital Bangladesh	Two hundred 70 digital services are being provided through 6 thousand 686 digital centers and 8500 e-post offices. On an average, 45 lakh services are being rendered in every month.	Though there was a scope of having free submarine fiber optic cable connection in 2004, that opportunity was not availed.
Access to Satellite Era	With the launching of Bangabandhu satellite-1, Bangladesh earned the prestige of being 57th satellite projecting country of the world.	There was no concept or initiative.
Nuclear Power plant Establishment	The construction work of 2 thousand 421 megawatts nuclear power plant at Ruppur in Pabna is progressing fast.	There was no plan of building up any nuclear power plant.
Power Production	Power production capacity increased to 24 thousand 421 megawatts. At present, 99% people are getting electricity facility. Electricity coverage will be extended 60 percent during Mujib birth centenary.	Electricity production was only 3200 megawatts which covered 47% people.
Community Clinic	Fourteen thousand 500 community clinics were established to reach medical services to the door-steps of the people. More than 23 thousand physicians were recruited.	Community clinics were shutdown.
Average Life Acceptance	As social security and medicare systems have developed, the life expectancy of the people has increased to 73.2 years.	It was only 65.4 years.
Child and Maternal Mortality	Currently, child mortality rate in the country is 22 (in every thousand) and maternal mortality rate 1.69 (in every lakh).	Child mortality rate was 50 and maternal mortality rate was 3.48.
Quami Madrasa Education	Through offering masters equivalence to the Madrasa-e-Halith, the highest level degree of Quami Madrasa, about 35 lakh students of this madrasa system were brought to the main stream education system.	There was a mockery with them in the name of recognition.
Model Mosque cum Islamic Centre	It was decided to build a total of 560 model mosque cum Islamic cultural centers covering every district and upazila. By this time, 200 mosques are visible.	Islam, as a religion, was used as a political weapon.
Temple based Mass Literacy Program	Through 6 thousand 450 pre-primary educational centers, pre-primary, ethical and religious knowledge was offered to 17 lakh 23 thousand children during 2009-19.	Religion was used as a political weapon.
Development of Buddha Bihar	Tk. 4 crore 10 lakh from Hon'ble Prime Minister's Relief Fund was given to various Buddha Bihar as donation. Moreover, Pagoda based Pre-Primary Education Project is being implemented. Three hundred educational centers are working to educate 14 thousand buddhist children.	Attacks were repeatedly unleashed on the other religious communities during the period from 2001 to 2006.
Development of Christianity	The Christian Religious Welfare Trust Act 2018 was formulated. On the occasion of Christmas Day, Tk. 1 crore 38 lakh was donated from Prime Minister's Relief and Welfare Fund to 224 churches and other related religious organizations.	Church was attacked in 2001.
Various Privileges for Veteran Freedom Fighters	It was decided to give veteran freedom fighter Tk. 10 lakh interest free house building loan. The government also introduced monthly honorarium, pension facility, festival allowance, new year allowance, Victory Day allowance and allowance for wedding ceremony of the female children.	There was no such initiative. The freedom fighters, in many cases, were deprived of due honour.
Establishment of 100 Economic Zones	The government has taken an initiative to establish 100 special economic zones for attracting investment. These economic zones would provide employment for 1 crore people.	There was no such initiative.
Delta Plan	A 100-year Delta Plan has been adopted to lead the advancement of Bangladesh like the developed world.	There was no such initiative.
Women and Children Development Policy	National Women Development Policy-2011, National Children Policy-2011, Domestic Violence (Prevention & Protection) Act 2010 and Women and Children Repression Prevention (amended) Act 2020 were formulated for the overall development of women.	There was no such initiative.
e-Mutation of Land Property	Currently, e-mutation program is going on at 485 upazila land offices and circle offices and 3 thousand 617 union land offices. Services of the e-mutation program have already been provided to more than 1 crore people.	There was no such initiative.
Assistance/Donation for Journalists	The government formulated Bangladesh Journalists Welfare Trust Act 2014 through which financial assistance of Tk. 17 crore 87 lakh was provided to 5,263 journalists till date. During Corona Pandemic, financial assistance has been provided to the journalists which is unique in the sub-continent.	There was no such initiative.



The whole structure of Padma Bridge is now visible