



ADDRESS
OF
HON'BLE PRESIDENT
MD. ZILLUR RAHMAN

AT THE
FIRST SESSION OF 2011
OF THE
NINTH JATIYA SANGSAD

(ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

DHAKA

12 MAGH 1417
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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

(In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful)

Mr. Speaker,

Assalamu Alaikum.

I am delighted and proud to be present before you today in this great Jatiya Sangsad. I am grateful to the Almighty Allah for being able to discharge the constitutional responsibility of delivering this address to the countrymen in the Jatiya Sangsad. I extend my sincere felicitations and greetings to you and through you, to the Honourable Members of the Jatiya Sangsad and my beloved countrymen at the start of the first parliamentary session of the year 2011.

2. This year, four decades of our glorious independence — the pride of the Bengalee nation — will be completed. At the very outset, I recall with deep reverence and gratitude the undisputed leader of the liberation struggle, the dreamer of independent Bangladesh, the greatest Bengalee of all times, the architect of a free and sovereign Bangladesh, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. I remember with deep respect all patriotic freedom fighters, including the fearless martyrs. Their struggles and sacrifices resulted in the creation of this beloved country. I recall with gratitude the four national leaders—Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, M. Monsur Ali and A H M Quamaruzzaman. At the same time, I also recollect today all those martyrs who sacrificed their lives in our democratic

march. I recall with reverence the pioneers of the struggle for realization of the rights of self-determination and democracy of the Bengalee people — national leader Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Haque, fearless warrior of democracy Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy and leader of the toiling masses Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani.

3. The killings on 15 August 1975 were a terrible episode in the history of the Bengalee nation. I recall with deep respect those who were brutally killed on that dark night along with Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman — his illustrious wife Fazilatunnessa Mujib, three sons Sheikh Kamal, Sheikh Jamal and Sheikh Russel, daughters-in-law Sultana Kamal Khuku and Parvin Jamal Rozi, younger brother Sheikh Abu Naser, brother-in-law and the then Irrigation and Flood Control Minister Abdur Rab Serniabat and his family members, nephew and founder chairman of Awami Jubo League Sheikh Fazlul Haq Moni and his wife, and Colonel Jamil Uddin Ahmed.

4. We have lost many self-sacrificing, dedicated and struggling people in the past. With a heavy heart I recall former member of parliament and executive president of the Sramik League Ahsanullah Master, who embraced martyrdom after being shot by an unknown assailant in 2004, 22 political leaders and activists including my wife and women's leader Ivy Rahman who lost their lives during a barbaric grenade attack on 21 August 2004 aimed at killing the present Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina; former Finance Minister and Member of Parliament S A M S Kibria — who was martyred by a grenade attack on 27 January 2005 beside other political workers.

5. I pay my deep respect and condolence at the death of former Minister & MP and a valiant freedom fighter M A Mannan. I also remember veteran politician, a leading organiser of the liberation war, honourable member of parliament from Habiganj-1 constituency and President of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Primary and Mass Education Dewan Farid Gazi; valiant freedom fighter, MP from Brahmanbaria-3 constituency and President of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Commerce Advocate Lutful Hai Sachchu; valiant freedom fighter, Sector Commander of Sector-5 during the liberation war and former minister Lt. General (retd.) Mir Shawkat Ali, Bir Uttam, and other members of parliament, leaders and dignitaries who passed away during the last one year. I pray to the Almighty, the Most Merciful Allah for the salvation of the departed souls.

6. Soon after assuming office, the newly elected government faced a grave crisis as well as a critical test when meritorious officers of the patriotic army were brutally killed during a mutiny by a section of unruly BDR troops instigated by an evil force on 25 February 2009. This kind of beastly act was enacted to halt the onward march of the newly elected government. The democratic government could successfully suppress this armed mutiny due to the pragmatism and farsightedness of Honourable Prime Minister. The tragic killings of the talented army officers were an irreparable loss for the nation.

Mr. Speaker,

7. The independence of Bangladesh is the greatest accomplishment of the Bengalee nation. This dearest country, our beloved Bangladesh was earned through ultimate sacrifices of 3 million martyrs during the Liberation War in 1971, after charting a historic course of movements and struggles. We achieved an independent and sovereign country, a map, a flag and a constitution. However, Bangladesh's progress had been hindered due to the conspiracies of evil forces at different times. After crossing a long and rugged road, today's 'Government of Changing Days' was established through obtaining a massive mandate of the people in a free, universally-accepted, impartial and globally acclaimed parliamentary election. The present government has presented a charter of change to the people called 'Vision 2021'. The government assumed the responsibility of running the country after obtaining a decisive verdict of the people amid a critical and uncertain situation, created by a lengthy state of emergency rule, unstable markets, sluggish businesses and global economic recession. After assuming office, the government has been working tirelessly to transform Bangladesh into a 'middle-income country' by 2021 — the golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence, by ensuring overall economic stability, containing prices of essentials, long-term and sustainable measures against corruption, timely distribution of agricultural inputs, integrated policy formulation and timely steps in power and energy sector, modernisation of the industrial sector, implementation of the commitment to establish a Digital Bangladesh, poverty alleviation, and above all, establishment of good governance in all areas

including the trial of war crimes. Today, our collective dream is to build a truly participatory, tolerant, democratic, liberal and secular state system and a developed, prosperous, happy and golden Bangla.

8. The present government took initiatives for making overall development efforts of the country more coordinated, dynamic and realistic immediately after assuming office. Policies and strategies were devised for swift alleviation of poverty by modifying the National Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper-2 in order to make it consistent with the demands of changing days. Besides, a ten-year Perspective Plan (2010-21) will soon be finalised. To translate this perspective plan into a reality, the formulation of the sixth Five-year Plan (2011-15) has been taken up. Initiative has also been taken to increase the duration of medium term budgetary framework from 3 years to 5 years. Although 2009 was a preparatory year for the government, it started rigorous implementation of adopted programmes in 2010. Work is going on to meet the target of 100 percent implementation of a bigger sized annual development programme this year. In spite of a difficult global recession, the country continues to maintain the trend of high growth due to pragmatic macroeconomic management by the government. A total of 221,500 persons have found employment in government jobs during the tenure of the present government. Employment creation for such a huge number of people in such a short time has been a big success. Swift improvements are taking place in the power and energy sector by undertaking various short, medium and long-term action-plans including increase in power production, rehabilitation and expansion of

transmission and distribution lines as well as infrastructure, attracting private sector and PPP investments as well as demand management in order to overcome the fragile and devastated state of the sector left behind by the previous government at the time of our assumption of office.

9. The government's development strategies for establishing good governance in various areas have received international acclaim by now. The growth of Gross Domestic Product, successes in disaster management, women's empowerment, construction of rural infrastructure, achieving gender parity in education at primary and secondary levels – all these are unique successes of Bangladesh. Bangladesh received award from the United Nations for massive reduction of under-five mortality rate of children, an indicator of the Millennium Development Goals. In the 'Doing Business Report 2010' of the World Bank, Bangladesh was placed among the top ten countries that made substantial reforms in removing business-related complications and obstacles during the last one year. A report in the Wall Street Journal on the '2010 - Index of Economic Freedom' accorded international recognition to Bangladesh's important progress in achieving economic freedom. A survey by the Action Aid International moved Bangladesh's ranking up by ten positions to sixth for scoring 44 points among 28 vulnerable countries for successfully managing the hunger situation. In spite of natural calamities and problems, Bangladesh has been continuously making progress in economic emancipation by tackling disasters and crises. All countries face some obstacles to good governance. Alongside successes, Bangladesh also faces some challenges in the field. It has been observed at the

global level that there is an upward trend in food prices. The present globalisation process has created multidimensional challenges side by side with various opportunities. The government is aware of the crisis in public life as well as in food security and these challenges are being effectively addressed through necessary measures.

10. Since its inception, the government has remained pledge-bound to establish rule of law in the country. The nation has been able to reduce its burden of shame through execution of the verdict after the trial of the barbaric killings of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu and his family-members. However, we have the responsibility of completing the trial process by bringing back the fugitive convicts and putting them under the purview of law. Existing laws and internationally accepted and recognised processes are being followed for holding the trial of the war-criminals. All conspiracies for hindering the trial process have to be thwarted. Initiatives have been taken for retrial of the jail-killings of four leaders and for expediting the trial of the real culprits in the 21 August grenade attack after proper investigation.

11. The government undertook massive reformative programmes at the very start of its tenure. Formulation, close monitoring and successful implementation of multi-dimensional and long-term plans is required for continuous reforms in different sectors of the country. Through the enactment of the Right to Information Law, the rights of the people for accessing public information by eliminating the traditional mentality of official secrecy has been ensured, in line with the principle of free flow of information in the

present-day world. The rights of the consumers are now being protected through enactment of the Consumers Protection Act. Development works at the grassroots are being geared up through establishing powerful local governments in a decentralised governance structure. 130 laws have already been enacted for establishing sustainable democracy and rule of law. Many rules and regulations have been made time-befitting. A new and service-oriented culture of change is evident due to adoption of multi-dimensional reform programmes in various sectors of the country. Reaching out to the rural people by providing them with swift and cheap citizens' services through the use of information technology is no more a fairy-tale. The government is resolutely working to deliver services to the doorsteps of the common people by establishing a digital Bangladesh by the year 2021.

(A) Economy

Mr. Speaker,

12. The government assumed the responsibility of running the statecraft with the pledge of implementing the vision of transforming the country into a middle-income one by the year 2021. But the country's economic growth faced the threat of a contraction in the backdrop of international economic crisis. The life of citizens was in a perilous state due to the pressure of rising prices, consecutive floods, devastations in vast areas of the country following the cyclones 'Sidr' and 'Aila'. But the adoption and implementation of timely and pragmatic policies and strategies by the government made it possible to maintain

the trend of high growth on the one hand and curb the pressure of inflation on the other; as a result, calm was restored in public life.

13. In order to boost up the economy of Bangladesh by tackling possible adverse impacts of the global economic crisis, the first incentive package of Tk 34.24 billion was announced in April 2009 and the second package was declared in November 2009. The incentive packages gave due considerations to diversification of commodities and markets in exports, the ship building, frozen foods and readymade garments sectors and the provision of policy and financial supports for flourishing of small and medium enterprises. The target for GDP growth rate has been fixed at 6.7 percent during 2010-11 in the backdrop of enhanced production and supply by the power and energy sectors, sustainable development of agriculture sector, steps for increasing public and private investments and the upturn of the global economy. Based on preliminary estimates of 5.83 percent GDP growth rate during 2009-10 financial year, the per capita income has now reached US \$ 751. Despite the negative impact of global recession, overall annual exports recorded a positive growth (4.1 percent) during 2009-10 financial year. The export target for the current fiscal year has been fixed at US \$ 18.50 billion. Export earnings have totalled US \$ 10.26 billion during July-December period of the current fiscal year, thereby registering an increase of 41 percent over the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year. This kind of growth is unprecedented in the history of exports from Bangladesh. Imports also registered an overall positive growth (5.4%) during the financial year. The total import payments during 2009-10 financial year was Tk

1607.84 billion (US \$ 22.97 billion), which was 7.11% higher than the previous fiscal year. On the other hand, the import payments during the July-December 2010 period were US \$ 15.03 billion, which was 40.26% higher than the corresponding period of the previous financial year. Imports have marked a rise in recent times due to notable increase in imports of machineries and raw materials. Overall, more emphasis is being placed now on enhancing exports and foreign investments in Bangladesh through economic diplomacy.

14. A budget of Tk 1321.70 billion has been announced for the 2010-11 financial year for facing global economic recession and the realisation of pledges and targets of the government. A target of collecting Tk 74.77 billion through savings schemes has been set for partially meeting the budget deficit of Tk 345.14 billion. Against this target, an amount of Tk 20.68 billion has been collected during the first five months (up to November 2010). Enhanced production and supply of power and energy, employment generation, infrastructure development, poverty alleviation, human resource development and women's advancement have been attached top priority in the budget. The government has adopted immediate, short and medium-term time-bound action-plans through formulation of a "roadmap for development of power and energy sector" with the objective of supplying 9,426 megawatt of additional electricity by 2015. For implementation of the plan, power production on the basis of public-private partnerships is being encouraged alongside governmental initiatives. The budgetary allocation for the power and energy sector has been raised by 61.5 percent compared to the previous year to

Tk 61.15 billion in the 2010-11 budget with the objective of achieving targets in the sector. An ADP having an outlay of Tk 385 billion has been undertaken during the current financial year by increasing the outlay by 26.2% compared to the previous year's budget, as a tool for raising the proportion of investments to 30–32 percent of GDP in order to enhance the GDP growth rate to 8 percent by the year 2013 in accordance with Vision-2021 of the present government. Investment-friendly policies and strategies have been adopted with the goal of attracting a lion's share of the planned investments from private and foreign direct sectors. The equity fund for creation of entrepreneurs in the IT sector has been increased to Tk 4 billion for assisting in the grooming of entrepreneurs in the sector. A Tk 7 billion national climate change fund has been created by the government through self-financing and another Tk 7.7 billion (US \$ 110 million) 'Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund (BCCRF) has been established with the participation of development partners. A Tk 3 billion refinancing fund has also been created to help set up Effluent Treatment Plants in industrial establishments.

15. The presentation of quarterly reports on progress in budgetary implementation before the Jatiya Sangsad in accordance with Government Financial and Budget Management Act, 2009 has rendered the supervisory role of parliament easier. It is at the same time playing a role in ensuring the right to information of the people. A budget and planning wing is being set up in all ministries/divisions under existing organizational structure for strengthening the formulation, implementation and monitoring of budgets. A total of 14 annual reports on ministries and 4 special audit

reports on the accounts of 2006-07 financial year prepared by the C & AG have been submitted. An arrangement for opening bank accounts with minimum savings of Tk 10 has been made for obtaining agricultural credit and official input assistance easily. The most important infrastructure for a modern payment and settlement system — an automated clearing house has been put into operation in Bangladesh Bank. A Capital Market Institute has been launched for creating awareness on stock market investments and grooming efficient manpower in the sector. Some NGOs have been involved and scopes for mobile phone and postal services have been created in order to encourage sending of remittance through recognised channels and their swift delivery at the recipients' end. Steps have been taken for raising the living standard of the workers employed in the garments industry by enhancing their minimum wages at all levels.

16. Foreign aid commitment for 2010-11 fiscal year has been projected at Tk 455 billion (US \$ 6.5 billion). It is expected that the commitments made would be almost double compared to the previous year for development projects like the Padma Multipurpose Bridge. A soft-loan agreement for Tk 70 billion (US \$ 1 billion) has already been signed with India; loan agreement for Tk 29.68 billion (US \$ 424 million) has been signed with Japan; for Tk 16.38 billion (US \$ 234 million) with the Chinese government; and for Tk 10.72 billion (US \$ 153.19 million) with the Korean government. Of the projected foreign aid of Tk 189 billion (US \$ 2.7 billion) for the current financial year, it has been possible to spend Tk 57.29 billion (US \$ 818.54 million) up to December 2010. The share of Bangladesh in ADB has

risen to 108,384 from 36,128 due to acquisition of additional 72,256 shares. As a member state of ADB, Bangladesh's voting power has increased due to these additional shares. Joint cooperation strategies have been signed with 18 development partners (countries and organizations) as a follow-up of the meeting of Bangladesh Development Forum held in Dhaka last year. The Dhaka Outcome Document adopted during the regional conference of least developed countries held in Dhaka last year will be presented by ESCAP at the next LDC conference of the United Nations, as the viewpoint of the Asia-Pacific region.

Mr. Speaker,

17. Revenue collection was above target during 2009-10 financial year, which totalled Tk 620.46 billion against the target of Tk 610 billion. It was Tk 95.19 billion or 18.12 percent more than the previous year. Revenue collection during the first six months of the 2010-11 financial year (up to December 2010) was Tk 333.36 billion. It was Tk 69.42 billion or 26.30 % more compared to the same period of the previous fiscal year. It is expected that this trend will continue throughout the year. Domestic production has been encouraged alongside protection of local industries and just rights of the ordinary consumers due to reformative measures in the fields of import duties, value added tax and income tax. A 5% regulatory duty has been maintained on imported finished products with the objective of protecting domestic industries. Alongside continuation of zero duty on essential commodities, import duties on sugar, powdered milk and dates have been reduced. Supplementary duty has

been increased for discouraging the import of luxury vehicles.

18. Laws and procedures have been amended side by side with expansion of the coverage of income tax and value added tax (VAT). The drafts for new income tax and VAT laws have been prepared for simplifying these laws and making them time-befitting. Appropriate enforcement of laws, close monitoring and administrative actions have been geared up. VAT and income tax rules have been simplified in some instances. The price levels and supplementary duties on cigarettes have been enhanced by taking into account its harmful effects on public health. In order to provide assistance to small and medium scale industries, scope for paying 4% turnover tax is currently in vogue for an annual turnover limit of up to Tk 4 million. Considering the important contribution of this sector in the industrialisation of the country, the highest ceiling of annual turnover has been fixed at Tk 6 million. The procedure relating to the 'declaration of value' by a producer has been simplified. A provision for protecting the confidentiality of the declaration of information by the tax-payers has been incorporated in the VAT Act. As a support to elderly citizens and development of women, the limit of tax-free income has been raised to Tk 0.18 million for citizens above 65 years of age (for men) and for women of any age; this ceiling has been fixed at Tk 0.2 million for disabled people. A provision of 10% tax rebate has been introduced for ameliorating the sufferings caused by natural disasters, to assist the education of rootless children, campaigns against dowry system and promotion of women's rights, research on the liberation war

and freedom fighters, and for providing encouragement to the freedom fighters to lead a respectable life.

19. In order to materialise the government's dream of a Digital Bangladesh, e-filing has been introduced on a pilot basis for submitting tax returns. Besides, a procedure for submitting VAT registration and return forms online has been started on an experimental basis. 'Tax calculator software' has been put up in the website of National Board of Revenue (NBR) for automatic computation of income and income tax. Changes in income tax laws and rules relating to the filling-up of individual tax return forms have been regularly updated in the website of NBR. In order to facilitate payment of tax and provision of one-stop service, spot assessment procedure has been introduced. Income tax fair has been organised for raising tax related awareness. Income tax day has been observed and taxpayers who have paid highest taxes and for long periods have been honoured at district level. A decision has been taken for awarding tax cards to highest paying tax-payers at the national level in order to accord them recognition and provide them with facilities. The government has formulated a policy to extend various facilities to the highest tax-payers by granting them the status of Commercially Important Persons (CIPs).

20. Since assumption of office, the present government has approved 436 projects up to December 2010 at a projected cost of Tk 1333.42 billion at meetings of the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC). Earlier, revised ADP used to be finalised just one to two months before the expiry of the financial year.

Revised ADP is now being formulated in the month of January since 2010 in order to facilitate its implementation.

21. Monitoring and evaluation of projects executed under the Annual Development Programme (ADP) is carried out by the Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED). It inspected 855 projects out of a total 1062 during 2009-10 financial year and 347 projects out of a total 916 during 2010-11 financial year (up to November 2010). Besides, reports have been submitted after evaluating 226 projects of 2007-08 fiscal year and 162 projects of 2008-09 fiscal year. Evaluation reports on 51 projects out of 224 completed during 2009-10 have already been submitted and evaluation of the remaining 173 projects is in progress.

22. Around 91 percent of the revised ADP for 2009-10 was implemented by 30 June 2010, i.e. Tk 259.21 billion was spent out of a total Tk 285 billion allocation, which was the highest ever. Besides, out of an ADP allocation of Tk 385 billion for 2010-11, an amount of Tk 102.92 billion has been spent up to December 2010, which was 88.11 billion last year. This increase of Tk 14.81 billion demonstrates the efficiency of the present government.

23. The Public Procurement Act, 2006 and The Public Procurement Rules, 2008 are being adhered to in all government purchases for ensuring transparency, accountability and legality of the procurement process. Some amendments have already been made to PPA-2006 and PPR-2008 in order to expedite the implementation process of projects. Four target agencies, viz. Roads and Highways Department, Bangladesh Water Development

Board, Rural Electrification Board and Local Government Engineering Department are implementing Electronic Government Procurement (e-GP) under the purview of Public Procurement Reform Project of the Central Procurement Technical Unit (CPTU) under the IMED Division. It is expected that e-GP would commence on a pilot basis in these 4 organizations within this month.

24. The Statistics Division under the Ministry of Planning has been re-established after giving due consideration to the importance of statistics in overall development of the country. Steps have been taken for renaming this division as Statistics and Informatics Division. Availability of updated and correct data is very important for proper formulation of plans on various issues including population. The 5th census and household survey will be conducted between 15 and 19 March this year. Apart from using digital maps of mouza/mahalla, intelligent character recognition (ICR) technology will be applied for the first time for storage and processing of census data within a short time. It is expected that it will be possible to publish error-free census results within the shortest possible time through application of this technology. Presently, information are being collected and processed from remote areas of the country by using laptops and digital methods during Household Income and Expenditure Surveys. Moreover, 3 international standard ICT Training Labs have been set up at Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). The current website has been converted into a dynamic one and work on preparation of a comprehensive list of hardcore poor for streamlining of social safety net programmes has been started. A comprehensive programme has been undertaken

for reorganization of BBS and the use of ICT in all areas in order to bring about qualitative changes in statistical management of Bangladesh.

25. A monetary policy stance has been adopted by Bangladesh Bank for July-December 2010 period to continue the optimum growth trend of production and expedite the implementation of government programmes relating to poverty alleviation by containing inflation. Expansion of inclusion initiatives in financial services are being continued to provide strong support for adequate lending in agriculture, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), renewable energy and other productive sectors; expansion in lending for wasteful consumption and unproductive speculative investments is being discouraged. Expediting economic growth is the prime target of the monetary programme formulated for 2010-11 financial year. To achieve the targeted economic growth, the growth of private sector credit has been projected at 16% for 2010-11 fiscal year based on the programmed growth of reserve money and broad money at 13% and 15.2 % respectively during the financial year. The banking sector is the key vehicle for influencing the real sector through monetary and credit policies; reform measures for enhancing the capacity and efficiency of the banking sector are therefore being monitored actively. State-owned and private sector banks have been brought under the purview of monitoring and supervision of Bangladesh Bank in order to ensure financial stability. The government has involved the local and foreign-owned banks for the first time alongside state-owned banks and financial institutions since 2007-08 for keeping the agriculture sector in a healthy state. All banks and

financial institutions have been set a target of Tk 126.17 billion for distribution of agricultural credit during 2010-11 fiscal year. A total of 36.084 billion agricultural credits have been disbursed in 4 months up to October 2010. On the other hand, foreign exchange reserve was Tk 782.20 billion (US \$ 11.17 billion) in December, 2010, with which the liability of foreign exchanges can be paid for more than three months.

26. The expatriate Bangladeshi workers are making an important contribution to the country's economy by sending remittances. The foreign currencies sent by expatriate workers between January 2009 and December 2010 amounted to almost Tk 1504.87 billion. The expatriate Bangladeshis sent a highest ever amount of Tk 765.06 billion during the year 2010. Remittances now account for 13% of GDP; it is now 6 times that of foreign aid and 13 times that of foreign investments. A new foundation for the national economy will be laid through proper utilisation of remittances. The government has set up expatriates' welfare desk in three international airports for providing all kinds of facilities to workers going abroad as well as wage earners. Grants for the family of workers who die abroad has been raised to Tk 0.2 million from Tk 0.1 million; grant for funeral expenses has also been increased to Tk 35 thousand from the previous Tk 20 thousand. Expatriate Welfare Bank has been established as a specialised bank for expatriates with the aim of extending soft loan to unemployed persons to cover their emigration expenses for overseas employment; to encourage the expatriates to invest in Bangladesh; and to provide assistance to expatriates in

sending home remittances through a swift, cost-effective and easy method. Initiative has been taken to amend the existing Money Laundering Prevention Act in accordance with international standards for preventing illegal transfer, conversion and trafficking of money and wealth. A time-bound action plan is being formulated for prevention of money laundering and terror financing.

27. The capital market of Bangladesh holds enormous potential. The market capitalisation at the stock market on 30 December 2010 was Tk 3508 billion, which was about 50.80% of the GDP. At the end of 2000, the market capitalisation was Tk 61.26 billion, which was about 2.24% of GDP. Compared to 2000, market capitalisation has increased by 57.26 times and its ratio to GDP has increased by 21 times. The Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority Act, 2010 and the Insurance Act, 2010 have been formulated with several objectives like expanding the insurance sector, making the sector time-befitting, preserving the rights and interests of the policy holders and ensuring systematic development and regulation of the insurance business.

(B) Industry and Commerce

Mr. Speaker,

28. The present government assumed the responsibility of running the country with a pledge to keep the prices of essential commodities within the purchasing power of the people in the backdrop of a prolonged global recession. The government has approved a three-year (2009-12) new import

and export policy in line with general economic policies, keeping in mind the rapid changes taking place in world trade under the influence of globalization and open-market economy. Through this, import of capital machineries and industrial raw materials including consumer goods has been made easier, investments and production of goods have increased and the export markets have expanded. The interest rates of banks have been reduced and imports of essential products have been encouraged for keeping the domestic price level within a tolerable range. The market regulation capacity of Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) has been enhanced by building buffer stock of essential commodities. Monitoring mechanism of commodities has been strengthened at national and district levels through the consumer rights protection department. The prices of commodities were stable and affordable during the last Ramadan compared to any time in the past due to the positive impacts of these measures.

29. The Consumer Rights Protection Act, 2009 has been enacted with a view to properly preserve the rights of consumers in the domestic market. National Consumer Rights Protection Department and National Consumer Rights Protection Council comprising of members from the government and the civil society have been established to enforce the Act. Initiative has been taken to constitute consumer rights protection committees at the district level. The government has given approval to the appointment of 233 employees in this department very soon. The operation of the Department of Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms has been fully automated by making available all its services online. As a result, the time required for

registration of business establishments has been reduced to only four hours compared to the previous requirement of thirty days.

30. Under the purview of SAFTA, India and Pakistan have reduced the duties of all commodities outside the sensitive list from least developed countries like Bangladesh to 0-5% with effect from 1 July 2009. The 'SAARC Agreement on Trade in Services' has been signed in April 2010 with the goal of bringing the service sector within the fold of economic cooperation under SAARC. Investments will rise and employments will be generated in Bangladesh if the agreement is put into operation. Under the World Trade Organization, China and South Korea have provided duty-free facility to 4,721 and 8,778 products respectively from least developed countries including Bangladesh. Bangladesh has signed and ratified two agreements, viz. 'Framework Agreement on Trade Facilitation' and 'Framework Agreement on the Promotion, Protection and Liberalisation of Investment' in 2010 under the Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA). Bangladesh has also ratified the Trade Preferential System among the Member States of the Organization of Islamic Conference (TPS-OIC) protocol with the objective of expanding trade with Muslim countries. In addition, the European Union has relaxed the rules of origin for GSP, as a result of which export of readymade garments and other commodities from Bangladesh will rise noticeably. Japan is considering relaxation of the rules of origin for readymade garments from Bangladesh following Honourable Prime Minister's recent visit to Japan. Malaysia has provided duty-free facility to 197 tariff-lines of 19 commodities from

Bangladesh during 2010. A trade centre has been established at Trinidad's Port of Spain with the goal of market expansion. Bangladesh participated in the ATF Show held at Cape Town of South Africa in October 2010. Besides, the signing of bilateral trade agreement with South Africa and Kuwait is also at a final stage. Discussions on enhancing bilateral trade ties with Brazil and Chile have also progressed well.

31. Effective initiative has been taken for expansion of trade with different countries of the world including the neighbouring ones. Bangladesh-Bhutan trade agreement has already been signed and bilateral trade agreement with India has been renewed for 3 years. According to the joint communiqué issued during Honourable Prime Minister's visit to India, talks are continuing with India on removal of non-tariff barriers to entry of Bangladeshi products in the Indian market. As a result of these discussions, India has already removed some non-tariff barriers. Duty-free access of 8 million pieces of readymade garments in the Indian market under Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ) has already been made operational. This quota has been used fully during 2010 and the facility has been extended for another year. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed for setting up 'Border Haats (Markets)' on Bangladesh-India border. Lauaghar of Sunamganj district and Balamari of Kurigram district have already been earmarked as sites for border haats. These border markets will be opened within the shortest possible time by the commerce ministers of Bangladesh and India. Besides, a policy guideline has been prepared for concluding bilateral free trade agreements (FTA) with various countries including India, Malaysia, Sri

Lanka and Pakistan. Vigorous efforts are being made to enhance the trading capacity of Bangladesh as a developing country, which include duty-free facility at the ongoing Doha Round, entry of Bangladeshi workers in developed countries, assistance under the purview of Aid for Trade in order to create a conducive environment for trade expansion, and obtaining technical and financial assistance for enhancing agricultural productivity as a net food importing country. The position of Bangladesh in these programmes has been decided based on consultations with the private sector.

32. The government has declared the National Industrial Policy 2010 with a pledge to accelerate economic growth through promotion of a thriving and modern industrial sector, halving the number of unemployed, hungry and poverty-stricken population within 2017, and transforming Bangladesh into a middle-income country by raising the GDP growth rate to 8 percent in 2013, 10 percent in 2017 and maintaining the trend up to 2021. This policy has accorded recognition to the planned and balanced development of small and medium enterprises (SME) and labour-intensive industries and accepted them as the priority sector. The government has already reorganised the SME task-force and activated the SME Foundation for the growth of SME sector. SME helpline centres have been set up at all district headquarters. Although the growth rate of manufacturing sector was 5.92% during 2009-10 fiscal year, the growth rate of small and cottage industries was 6.61%.

33. Due to global economic recession, the government has been extending many facilities so that local industries

can survive in the competition. In the light of recommendations made by a special committee, interests amounting to Tk 9.15 billion owed by 157 industries have been commuted. The government has taken measures to address the severe problems being faced by the frozen food sector due to global economic downturn. In order to sustain production in export-oriented projects under this sector, the government has made a provision for converting up to 30% of working capital loan into term-loan and allow repayments in quarterly instalments for five years, including a moratorium of 1 year.

34. An actual investment of US \$ 443.07 million has been made in the country's Export Processing Zones (EPZs) during the past two years. Approval has been accorded to set up 77 new industrial establishments in the EPZs during the period. Goods worth Tk 197.58 billion (US \$ 2822.54 million) have been exported from the EPZs during 2009-10 financial year, which was 9.32% higher than the previous year. This amount was 17.36% of national exports. Goods worth Tk 112.68 billion (US \$ 1609.66 million) were exported during the first six months of the 2010-11 fiscal year. Besides, Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) has earned Tk 1.28 billion during 2009-10 fiscal year. Investments in the EPZs totalled US \$ 1582.47 million up to 2008-09 financial year. This amount rose to US \$ 1804.46 million during 2009-10 fiscal year. The amount was 14% higher than the previous year. At present, opportunities have been created for direct employment of 269, 231 workers in the EPZs. A total of 16,394 workers found employment in the industrial establishments of EPZs during 2008-09 fiscal year, which

rose to 28,064 during 2009-10 financial year. Employment opportunities for another 13,699 workers were created up to December 2010. Automation system has been launched for granting approval of imports and exports at Dhaka and Chittagong EPZs. The revised minimum wage structure for EPZ workers has been made effective from November 2010.

35. Side by side with government-owned EPZs, the government is working for establishments of private EPZs. The previous Awami League government led by the present Prime Minister had approved the setting up of two private EPZs, namely: (1) Rangunia EPZ, and (2) Korean EPZ; as no progress was made regarding these EPZs during the tenures of the previous alliance government and the caretaker government, the present government has taken the initiative to expedite their implementation after assumption of office. If these two private EPZs are established, then employment opportunities will be created for over 100 thousand unemployed persons. Necessary SRO/circulars have already been issued through the National Board of Revenue and Bangladesh Bank for extending all required facilities to the private EPZs. Policies for setting up of industries and work-permits for foreign citizens have been drafted. The entrepreneurs have been issued with import-export permits and policy guidelines on duties. The Korean EPZ and Rangunia EPZ areas have been declared as warehousing stations. The Karnaphuli police station has been reorganised by bringing EPZ area under the purview of one police station as well as through creation of posts for the police camp at Korean EPZ for maintaining law and order. Fifty percent stamp duty on land transfer deed of EPZ has been waived. The industrial establishments to be set up

in the private EPZs have been given income tax waiver for 10 years from the date of their going into production. The gazette on organizational structure and service rules for the executive cell of the Private EPZ board of governors has been published. Besides, preparation of a separate building code and land lease contract is now in the final stage.

36. Policy and Strategy for Public-Private Partnership (PPP), 2010 has been issued for implementation of PPP initiatives. Establishment of an autonomous PPP office under the purview of Prime Minister's Office has been initiated in order to give institutional shape to the PPP programme. A Tk 16 billion Bangladesh Infrastructure Financing Fund (BIFF) has been created for extending assistance in project financing in the infrastructure sector through PPP. A technical assistance letter has been signed with the Asian Development Bank on 9 December 2010 for obtaining technical assistance in the implementation of PPP programme. Steps are being taken for spending Tk 30 billion allocated for the PPP projects of infrastructure sector in the 2010-11 budget.

37. The government has formulated the Bangladesh Economic Zones Act, 2010 in order to establish economic zones at promising places including backward regions with the goal of rapid economic development, industrialisation and increased employment opportunities in the country. Under this law, an authority styled Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority has been created. The draft organizational structure and service rules for the authority have been finalised. Work is progressing on other rules and regulations as well.

38. Two leading US-based credit rating agencies of the world, namely, Standard & Poor's (S&P) and Moody Investor's Service have recognised Bangladesh favourably as a reliable place for international credit and investment through two separate evaluations. It was the first sovereign rating for Bangladesh. It is expected that Bangladesh would be able to attract foreign investments due to these credit-rating recognitions. Between January 2009 and December 2010, a total of 3,309 projects have been registered for investment with the Board of Investment (BoI). The proposed investments in these projects totalled Tk 886.6 billion (US \$ 12,666 million) with employment opportunities for 700 thousand people. After registration of industrial projects, the one-stop cell of the Board of Investment is providing counselling and services on land, gas, power, telephone, water, sewerage, etc. 'Online Registration System' has been launched at the Board of Investment (BOI) with effect from 22 December 2010. The BOI has held investment promotion meetings with local and foreign chambers, industrialists, entrepreneurs and investment delegations for enhancing investments in the country. Road-Shows have already been staged in the UK, USA and Singapore for attracting investments in the power and energy sectors. Besides, meetings and seminars have been organised in Russia, Poland, Cambodia, South Korea, Malaysia and India for bringing in investments.

39. The pharmaceutical sector has become a fast-growing industry due to appropriate policies and incentives offered by the government. Local pharmaceutical industries have been meeting 97% of domestic demands, the value of which is around Tk 70 billion. This amount is increasing

gradually. It is expected that it would rise to around Tk 85 billion within next 2 to 3 years. After meeting domestic demands, medicine is now being exported to 79 countries including the USA and UK. Hi-tech medicines like anticancer drugs, hormones, insulin etc. are being produced in the country. Bangladesh would also produce vaccines very soon. If this trend of development continues, then the growth rate of this sector is expected to reach 25%. Work on setting up an Active Pharmaceuticals Ingredients (API) industrial park at Baushia of Munshiganj is progressing well.

40. During 2009-10 financial year, six fertilizer factories under the control of Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) produced 1.56 million metric tons of urea, while 1.338 million metric tons urea was imported to meet the local demand of fertilizer. The government has decided to establish three new fertilizer factories in the country. Of these, the establishment of Shahjalal Urea Fertilizer Factory having an annual production capacity of 577,500 metric tons is underway in Fenchuganj, Sylhet at a cost of approximately Tk 53 billion. BMRE projects of four fertilizer factories are also being implemented in phases during 2010-11 fiscal year.

41. Eight development projects have been taken up at a projected cost of Tk 3.17 billion under the annual development programme for 2010-11 with the goal of raising the capacity of sugar mills under the control of Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation. Bangladesh Steel and Engineering Corporation earned a net profit of Tk 760.92 million last fiscal year and deposited revenue of Tk 3.37 billion to the treasury. Bangladesh

Industrial and Technical Assistance Centre saved around Tk 400 million in foreign exchange last year by designing and manufacturing import-substitute spare-parts for industrial establishments of the country. As a part of efforts to build a Digital Bangladesh, a programme has been taken up for disseminating 'purji' (delivery orders) through SMS in 15 sugar mills under Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation (BSFIC) and establishing direct communication with the sugarcane cultivators. As a result, 150 thousand sugarcane growers are now getting 'purji' very quickly. BSFIC received the 'Manthan Prize-2010' for introducing this digital method. Implementation of Sirajganj Industrial Park, industrial towns at Comilla, Mirsarai and Gopalganj, Rangpur Benarasi Palli and Satranji Palli programmes is going on under the aegis of BSCIC.

42. BSTI has enforced law by running 1,513 mobile courts throughout the previous financial year in order to preserve quality of goods. A project is being implemented to modernise and enhance the capacity of Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institute (BSTI). The objectives of the project are to ensure the development, control and preservation of the quality of industrial and consumer products as well as sustain the production of international standard goods. The project would lead to upgrading of the BSTI Central Metrology Laboratory into an accredited laboratory recognised internationally. The Norwegian Accreditation Body has given its consent to accept the accreditation certificate issued by the Management System Certification Scheme of BSTI for five years. As a result, private organizations will be able to receive ISO 9000, ISO 14000 and ISO 22000 certificates from BSTI at minimum

cost. Accreditation certificates are being obtained from National Accreditation Board for Laboratory (NABL) and National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB) of India so that the laboratory test certificates and product certifications issued by BSTI are accepted internationally.

43. Bangladesh Shilpa Bank and Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha have been merged to establish a newly formed public limited company named Bangladesh Development Bank Limited. It is expected that the newly established bank will play a supportive role in economic development of the country through granting long-term industrial credit. Chittagong Particle Board and Veneering Plant and Tongi's Satrang Textile Mills have been transferred to private ownership as a part of the privatization process during the last two years. Apart from that, 20% shares of Salatin Syndicate Ltd. held by the government have been sold off to the private sector.

Mr. Speaker,

44. Textiles and Jute sectors play a crucial role in the economic development of Bangladesh. 81% of foreign exchange earnings of the country come from the export of readymade garments, primary textile products, raw jute and jute-goods. The jute sector plays a key supportive role in securing the position of readymade garments industry as the major foreign exchange earner. Textiles made from jute yarns play an important role in the supply of primary textile commodities to readymade garments industry. About 5 million people are engaged and employed in the primary

textiles sector, including readymade garments industries, and about 30 million people are directly or indirectly involved with various work related to raw jute and jute industries. Recent discovery of the 'genome code' for jute by accomplished scientists of the country has been an epoch-making success in agricultural research. It is the first instance of unravelling the genes of any agricultural crop in a least developed country and the seventeenth such instance in the world. As a result of this discovery on the jute genes, it is expected that revolutionary successes will be achieved in the areas of enhancing the productivity of jute and jute goods, improvement of quality and diversification of jute products.

45. Jute is an environment-friendly natural fibre. The rise in demand for jute and jute goods for containing environmental disaster globally is quite noticeable. Due to step-motherly negligence of anti-people governments in the past, who considered the country as a virgin ground for looting and plunder, and unqualified-inefficient-unprofessional attitude of those involved with the jute industry, this hugely promising sector incurred losses on a continuous basis. Frustration had built up among the farmers for not getting proper price of jute. The present government has succeeded in reinvigorating the jute sector from past mismanagement and disastrous situation. Production has been started on a trial basis after repair of the closed Qaumi Jute Mills and People's Jute Mills. Preparations are afoot for test launching of Daulatpur Jute Mills, MM Jute Mills and the second unit of Rajshahi Jute Mills. As a result, employment has been generated for 6 thousand men and women; another 6 thousand persons would find jobs if the

remaining mills are also reopened. The government has enacted the 'Compulsory Use of Jute Materials in Packaging Commodities Act, 2010' for the flourishing of jute sector and expansion of the jute industry. Due to sincere efforts of the present agriculture-friendly government, payment of wages to workers has been ensured; as a result, workers' unrest has been contained and production has increased. The peasants are naturally very happy and inspired due to the hefty prices they got by selling jute.

46. The demand for jute-goods is increasing worldwide due to rise in interest among the public about environment-friendly jute products. The present government has created a refinancing fund of Tk 5 billion for providing assistance to regaining the lost position of jute sector and the revival of jute industry. Encouraged by the rise in demand and price of raw jute, the farmers have cultivated jute in over 0.8 million hectares of land during 2009-10 financial year, which was 0.48 million during the preceding year. Foreign currency earned by exporting jute and jute-goods rose to Tk 11.31 billion and Tk 26.99 billion respectively during 2009-2010 financial year. The corresponding figures were Tk 9.21 billion and Tk 20.50 billion in the preceding year. The contribution of jute and jute-goods sector rose to 4.54% of national export earnings during 2009-2010, which was 2.68% during the previous financial year. The jute sector now occupies the second position in terms of export earnings. Environment-friendly bio-technology is now getting prominence everywhere in the backdrop of enhanced environmental awareness and ongoing environmental movement all over the world. Its influence is also being noticed in Bangladesh as well. Whereas 'synthetic geo-

textile technology' used to be applied in road construction and tackling land and river erosion as well as hill-collapse, 'bio-degradable geo-textile' technology is now being marketed in these fields. This development can be considered as a notable event in recent times as an example of technological uplift and overall growth of the jute industry.

47. Bangladesh Textile Mills Corporation (BTMC) was formed by nationalising the few mills and factories in the textiles sector still in operation among the heavy industries after the emergence of Bangladesh. This sector was thrown into ruination by providing opportunities for plunder after the killing of the Father of the Nation. As a result, BTMC is today sick and almost ruined. Due to ever-increasing demand and requirements in the readymade garments industry, the privately-owned textile industries underwent rapid expansion on a massive scale. Now, 81% of the required yarns and 33% of needed woven textiles are produced in Bangladesh. At present, abnormal rise of raw cotton in the world market has made the mill-owners quite apprehensive; the government is providing assistance to this sector through incentives. As yarns and cloths are the backward linkages for readymade garments sector, an 'Apparel and Textile Board Act, 2010' is now being formulated in order to improve management of this sector. The 'University of Textile Engineering' has been established at Tejgaon, Dhaka for development of skills. Side by side, six textile engineering colleges (at Begumganj/ Zorarganj/ Pabna/ Barisal/ Tangail/ Dinajpur) and 40 vocational textile institutes under the Textiles Department are being constructed for grooming textile engineers and technicians.

Out of 16 textile mills under the control of BTMC, 8 are in operation in accordance with the service-charge policy. Efforts are on to bring a few other mills into production. Steps have been taken to increase cotton production in northern region and hill districts of the country in place of tobacco production by motivating all concerned including the Cotton Development Board and BTMA. Overall, due to efficient management of the government and liberal incentives provided by the state for this privately-owned sector, the textiles sector has succeeded in overcoming the adverse impact of global recession; furthermore, it is expected to make necessary contribution to national development as a backward linkage industry of the readymade garments sector after overcoming the risks associated with high prices of cotton.

48. At the time of assumption of office by the present government, the power and energy sector was in a disastrous state. The inefficiency, short-sightedness and above all corruption of the previous alliance government had plunged the country into this crisis. For overcoming this intolerable situation, the key pledges of the present government included raising power production to 5 thousand megawatt by 2011 and 7 thousand megawatt by 2013. For materialising these pledges, plans have been adopted for producing 6 thousand megawatt power within 2011 and 10 thousand megawatt by 2013, which is more than what was pledged. The government has taken a number of firm measures for improving the situation in the power sector. Various initiatives have already been taken by the government including adoption of short, medium and long-term plans. Despite power shortages, it has been possible to

achieve bumper agricultural production in the country due to a successful irrigation programme based on improved load management. Besides, load shedding could be kept within a tolerable range through proper load management during the Ramadan. If a comparison is made between the situations during the two periods, it is found that whereas power production capacity was 3,267 megawatt at the time of government's assumption of office (6 January 2009), it underwent substantial increase during the past two years. The highest production was 4,698 megawatt on 20 August 2010.

49. After assuming office, the present government adopted a plan for producing 20 thousand megawatt electricity by 2021 by attaching top priority to the development of power sector through swift formulation and implementation of projects in order to ensure electricity for all. Steps were taken for swift approval and implementation of projects. For example, implementation of projects for constructing peaking plants at 10 places of the country having a total production capacity of 820 megawatt of electricity has already been started at a cost of Tk 69.58 billion. A total of Tk 43.81 billion investment in the power sector, having both GOB and project assistance component, have been made during the past two years. If the private sector is taken into account, then this amount would be more than double. Up to December 2010, additional 1021 megawatt of electricity has been added to the national grid. Power plants having a capacity of 2,704 megawatt of electricity, including 1,151 megawatt of electricity from the public sector and 1,553 megawatt from the private sector, will go into operation within 2011. Presently, electricity

production has declined in the power plants due to shortage of natural gas; as a consequence, construction of natural gas-based power plants has become uncertain in the future. To solve the power crisis on an urgent basis, the government has embarked on a plan to install new power plants of 12,280 megawatt capacity by using liquid fuel, coal, dual fuel and renewable energy, side by side with setting up of gas-based power plants, in order to increase power production within 2015 under the purview of public-private partnership. Measures have been taken for constructing commercial and large-scale power plants in accordance with this plan. From January 2009 till today, procurement programme for building power plants in the public and private sectors having a total capacity of 4,445 megawatt is almost final. Of these, agreements have been signed for constructing 35 power plants having a production capacity of 3,158 megawatt. Of these, 5 power plants have already been launched and the rest 30 are under construction. 4 power stations having a total capacity of 1,234 megawatt and 1 quick rental power plant having a capacity of 53 megawatt awaits signing of agreement. Besides, procurement programmes are continuing for setting up 27 power plants having a total capacity of 4,078 megawatt. Initiative has been taken for waiving VAT/tax on imported furnace oil in order to reduce the cost of power production. Steps have been taken to import/export electricity in future from neighbouring countries through inter-country cooperation. With this goal, work on importing power from India, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar is going on. Already, construction of transmission line from Bahrapur of India to Bheramara/Ishwardi of Bangladesh is going on, through which it will be possible to import 500 megawatt of power

from India. The possibility of importing electricity from Myanmar is also very bright. Preliminary discussions have taken place on importing 500 megawatt of electricity by 2017 from the proposed hydro-electric project in the Rakhaine state of Myanmar. Effective initiative has been taken for establishment of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant for meeting the rising demand of electricity in the country. The parliament has passed a resolution and a framework agreement has been signed with the government of Russian Federation for implementation of this project.

50. Alongside increasing the production of electricity, the government has undertaken multi-directional programmes for energy conservation and expansion of the use of renewable energy. Among these, plans have been approved for setting up solar power plants having a capacity of 35 megawatt and wind power plants having 100 megawatt capacity within 2012. The government has already provided tax exemption to all imported spare-parts required for solar power generation. Besides, an initiative has been taken to install solar power panels in all government, semi-government and autonomous offices in phases within 3 years. Initiative has been taken to amend the Building Code for inclusion of the themes of energy-saving lamps and solar power. Besides, effective measures have been taken for producing electricity from wastes. A draft law has been finalised on setting up a 'Sustainable Energy Development Authority' (SEDA) as a focal point for the development and expansion of sustainable energy system, including the use of renewable alternative energy. In its light, a number of programmes have been undertaken. The use of solar power has been encouraged in case of new power connections.

Initiative has been taken to encourage the subscribers to use energy saving lamps and equipment throughout the country. With this objective, steps have been taken to install pre-paid metering system all over the country. In the first phase, 35,000 pre-paid meters will be installed and ultimately 200 thousand pre-paid meters will be installed within the next two years. Electricity will be saved by using this metering system, revenue collection for the government will be ensured and the people will also remain free from harassment while paying power bills. Besides, under the Energy Lighting Initiative for Bangladesh (ELIB), a programme has been undertaken to replace 28 million inefficient electricity bulbs with CFL (Compact Fluorescent Lamp). Under this programme, 10.5 million energy saving lamps have already been distributed free of charge among the residential subscribers throughout the country on 19 June and 23 October 2010. In the second phase, another 17.5 million CFL will be distributed within this year. It is expected that a substantial amount of electricity will be saved by using these bulbs. Besides, the quantity of carbon emission will decline, which will help in reducing the risks emanating from climate change.

51. Various information technology-based measures have been taken for expanding the services in the power sector. Notable among these are: payment of electricity bills through SMS and internet, public complaint redress system, publishing all tenders/appointment notices on the website, use of e-mails for official communication, web-based project evaluation, installation of digital inter-phase meter (through which information on various grid sub-centres can be stored and analysed), etc. Accidents can occur anytime

due to the risks associated with hanging cables of various organizations connected to the power poles beside Dhaka city roads. Moreover, the aesthetic beauty of the city is also hampered by these hanging cables. Taking this into account, a programme has been undertaken to put all these cables under-ground through the initiative of Power Division from the beginning of last year. It is expected that this programme of putting hanging cables beside the Dhaka city roads under-ground will be completed very soon.

Mr. Speaker,

52. The importance and role of the energy sector is enormous in overall economic development of the country. In this backdrop, I recall with gratitude the contribution of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu in ensuring our energy security. Due to his foresight, Bangabandhu bought the 5 gas-fields at Titas, Habiganj, Rashidpur, Kailashtila and Bakhrabad from foreign companies on 9 August 1975 at a nominal price of 4.5 million pound sterling. The combined reserve in these gas fields is today 6.812 trillion cubic feet – whose market price is Tk 860 billion. As a result, it has been possible to use natural gas for industrialisation and other purposes at a minimal cost. August 9 is being observed as the 'National Energy Day' as a recognition to this contribution of Father of the Nation.

53. A huge amount of investment is needed for the energy sector, especially for supply of natural gas; on the other hand, benefit from this investment comes after a specific period of time. But no notable investments were made for enhancing the supply of natural gas during the

previous 7 years. Lack of planning and decision making in the sector, absence of foresight and above all pervasive corruption severely constrained the advancement of energy sector. Due to the failure of the previous government in making desired investments, the present government is facing a serious gas crisis.

54. The present government is making all-out efforts for tackling the energy crisis and enhancing the production and supply of natural gas. At the time of assumption of office by the government in January 2009, production of the country's principal fuel – natural gas was 1750 million cubic feet per day. Until now, it has been possible to produce an additional 285 million cubic feet of gas per day due to sincere efforts of the government. Daily production from 17 gas fields of the country has now crossed 2000 million cubic feet.

55. The present government has undertaken a programme to increase gas production in order to meet the rising demands for fuel in the country. Short term (up to December 2010), medium term (up to June 2013) and long term programmes (up to December 2015) including 'Fast Track Programme' have been taken up after obtaining approval of Honourable Prime Minister. Through implementation of this strategy, additional 188 million cubic feet of gas per day will be added to the national grid in the short term, 1,785 million cubic feet of gas (including 500 million cubic feet LNG) per day in the medium term, and 380 million cubic feet of additional gas per day will be added to the national grid in the long term. A programme for development and exploratory drilling of 25 wells has been

taken up for the next two years (2011-12). Drilling work has already started in some gas fields.

56. The national company BAPEX has already identified a promising gas structure at the bordering areas of Sunamganj and Netrakona districts: steps have been taken for exploratory drilling of this gas field named 'Sunetra'. Besides, an agreement for gas exploration in the bay with Conoco Philips is now at a final stage. Two gas distribution companies, viz. Sundarban Gas Company Limited and Karnaphuli Gas Company Limited have been formed for expansion of supply network and proper marketing of gas in the south-western and Chittagong region of the country. A 356 kilometre long gas transmission pipeline is being constructed with funding from the ADB, while steps have been taken for constructing 190 kilometre long pipeline up to Jalalabad, Bibiana, Dhanua for supplying gas to the national grid in line with demand.

57. Initiative has been taken to import LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) for meeting the demand for fuel. Under this programme, a floating LNG receiving and re-gasification station will be set up at Kutubdia as part of a plan to import 500 million cubic feet liquefied gas per day within 2012: construction of a pipeline from Kutubdia to Anwara has also been taken up. In the backdrop of fruitful discussions on obtaining natural gas in LNG form Qatar in the long run, work on signing a memorandum of understanding by the two countries is progressing.

58. Notable among the steps already taken for ensuring energy security in the country include: (a) updating the stock

of discovered oil and gas reserve; (b) strengthening of activities for exploration of oil and gas in onshore areas of the country; (c) boosting the exploration of fuels including coal; (d) expeditious signing of PSC (production sharing contracts) with international companies for exploration of oil and gas in offshore areas of the country (Bangladesh Offshore Bidding Round 2008); (e) updating of National Energy Policy and formulation of Coal Policy; (f) creation of Gas Development Fund to finance gas exploration and production by national companies; and (g) creating scope for utilising Bangladesh Infrastructure Finance Fund (BIFF) of the Ministry of Finance for gas sector development.

59. Bangladesh Gas Act, 2010 has been passed for ensuring proper use of gas all over Bangladesh. This law provides for various prison-terms/fines for crimes related to unapproved/illegal use of gas. Trial of various offences under this law will be started soon by running mobile courts. Besides, pre-paid and remote meters are being installed as part of an effort for instilling energy efficiency.

60. Most of the country's energy need is met from biomass. Environment is polluted due to the extensive use of fuel-wood. A programme has been started to increase the supply of LP gas as an alternative fuel in order to conserve the forests as well as the environment. With this objective, duties have been reduced on different spare-parts of LP cylinder. The production of LP gas has increased at government level after the assumption of office by the present government. Production of LP gas has risen to 11,829 metric tons during 2009-10 financial year. Production in six months up to December 2010 has been

10,350 metric tons. Besides, setting up of another bottling plant has been taken up at the governmental level.

61. Total estimated demand of petroleum oil for the financial year 2010-11 is 4.8 million metric tons, of which the demand for diesel is 3 million metric tons. Actions have been taken to ensure the supply of diesel /furnace oil to proposed power plants and construct infrastructure for increasing the storage capacity. Demand for diesel increases manifold during the Boro season. Hence, initiative has been taken to import additional quantity of diesel and increase storage capacity in order to ensure uninterrupted diesel supply for the purpose of irrigation. A project is now under process for bringing crude and refined petroleum products from ships anchored in the deep sea directly to storage tanks through pipelines. Initiative has also been taken to increase the refining capacity of Eastern Refinery Limited through modernisation. Approximately one million metric tons of HSFO will be required for new power plants scheduled to be established by 2011. Initiative has already been taken to import 0.52 million metric tons HSFO from different countries on G to G basis.

62. The government has already enacted the Speedy Supply of Electricity and Fuel (special provision) Act, 2010 in order to take swift and effective measures for ensuring uninterrupted supply of power and fuel in accordance with the demands from agriculture, industries, businesses and household. It will be now easier to implement various projects on an urgent basis through the application of this law. The Geological Survey of Bangladesh is implementing programmes on exploration, discovery and evaluation of

mineral resources (except oil and gas) in the country and conducting geological research. It has been possible to discover a number of coal mines through these programmes. At present, the organization is also working on earthquake, landslide and geo-thermal energy. Till now, 5 coal mines have been discovered; whose total stock is 3.3 billion metric ton. A coal policy is being finalised taking into consideration the geological structure of discovered coal fields, underground water level, morphology and natural attributes, adoption of acceptable techno-economic methods, mine management in the light of environmental study and other relevant issues with the goal of ensuring proper extraction and use of coal.

63. The Barapukuria Coal Mining Company went into commercial production from September 2005. The government has taken steps to rehabilitate and extend compensation to the people adversely affected by land subsidence at Barapukuria Coal Mine area. The affected people are being properly compensated and rehabilitated as a part of this initiative. A plan has been framed for establishment of a Mine City in the north-western part of the country. About 3.11 million metric tons of coal has been extracted from Barapukuria mine up to June 2010. Coal produced from Barapukuria Coal Mine is being used in the 250 megawatt Barapukuria Thermal Power Plant. On the other hand, Madhyapara Granite Mining Company Limited, the only hard rock mining company, has started commercial production from May 2007. About 13,16,197 metric tons of hard rock have been extracted from this mine up to June, 2010. Besides, 3 licences have been sanctioned for exploration of peat coal in Madaripur.

(C) Production

Mr. Speaker,

64. Bangladesh is an agrarian country with a peasant-friendly government in office at the moment. The government is implementing various programmes by attaching top priority to the agriculture sector with the objective of income enhancement of farmers, ensuring food security and poverty alleviation through increase in agricultural production. The country had attained self-sufficiency in food-grain production during the period 1996-2001 due to multifarious efforts of the then government. However, due to absence of sufficient initiatives by the successor government, the country faced food deficit and at one stage the prices of food went beyond the purchasing power of the common people. Immediately after assuming office for the current tenure, the government has taken numerous initiatives to make the country self-sufficient in food-grain once again. All programmes are being run by the government with the goal of ensuring food for all by making the country self-sufficient in food-grain production within 2013 in the light of its vision-2021. As a result, the significant and positive changes in the agriculture sector are now quite visible.

65. For the first time in Bangladesh, 'Agricultural Input Assistance Cards' have been distributed among 13.83 million farmers of the country. A total of 18.28 million cards will be distributed under this programme. By using these cards, bank accounts have been opened by around 9.161.755 farmers by depositing Tk 10 only. Tk 7.22 billion was

disbursed among the farmers last year through these bank accounts as subsidy for purchase of diesel for irrigation. Apart from establishing transparency in disbursing official financial assistance, it has wielded a positive impact on the rural economy, which will support the growth of agricultural output. In addition, a rebate of 20% has been allowed in bills for electricity used in operating irrigation equipment.

66. Twenty Agricultural Information and Communication Centres (AICC) have so far been launched and another 225 are under process in order to enable the farmers to consult the experts through video conferencing on different problems in crop production at the field level under the *e-Agriculture* programme of Agricultural Information Service. Agricultural information services will be delivered online to 1 thousand Union Councils. Moreover, a community radio station will be set up in Amtali of Barguna district to provide information to the farmers.

67. An initiative has been taken to make the National Agricultural Policy framed in 1999 time-befitting. Steps are being taken in line with the new policy to encourage invention and application of technology for a self-reliant and sustainable agricultural system consistent with the changing climate through research. In addition to ensuring poverty alleviation and food security through enhanced production of crops and generation of employment opportunities, it will be possible to make agriculture sustainable and market-oriented through this. Steps have been taken to formulate an 'Integrated Irrigation Policy,' while programmes are underway to extend appropriate technology and extension

work for subsidiary crops alongside the principal crops for poverty alleviation in the northern part of the country.

68. The present democratic government has taken numerous measures to enhance agricultural production and reduce the production cost of farmers. The very first meeting of the cabinet decided to reduce the price of fertilisers by attaching top priority to the agriculture sector. As a continuation of this policy, the prices of MOP and DAP fertilisers were reduced on 24 October 2010. The prices of non-urea fertilisers were reduced thrice to bring them within the purchasing power of farmers. The price of TSP fertiliser was reduced to Tk 22 per kg from Tk 80 per kg, the price of MOP fertiliser was reduced to Tk 15 from Tk 70 per kg and that of DAP fertiliser from Tk 90 per kg to Tk 27 per kg. As a result, the prices of these fertilisers have been reduced by an average of 73% compared to earlier prices. This price change has been effected gradually by increasing the subsidy assistance from the government. During the last fiscal year, the government gave total subsidies of Tk 48.92 billion on urea and non-urea fertilizers as well as in other areas of agriculture. With a view to making fertilizers easily available to the farmers, as many as five to nine retail sellers have been appointed in each of the unions. There is adequate stock of urea and non-urea fertilizer in the country. Sufficient allocations have been made for subsidies and farmers' support programmes in the current year's budget. The 'Bangabandhu National Agricultural Award 1415 BS' was conferred among 32 farmers and organizations on 26 July 2010 for their innovations of agricultural technology and extension works conducive to overall agricultural growth.

69. Apart from agricultural rehabilitation projects following natural calamities, the government has taken up different programmes for boosting production. Around 346,100 small and marginal farmers were given fertilizers fit to be used in one of bigha land free of charge, which involved an expenditure of Tk 260 million, as an incentive for cultivating Aus paddy in order to overcome the damage caused by early floods during the last Boro season. Also, farmers were given 15 thousand jute ribbons in 28 districts of the country at a cost of Tk 30 million, while a financial assistance of Tk 300 million were distributed among 1.5 million jute growers at the rate of Tk 200 per head. During the winter season of 2009-2010, around 385,000 farming families adversely affected by early floods were given necessary fertilizers and high yielding variety of seeds at a total cost of Tk 484.9 million, as assistance for cultivating Boro paddy. As a part of the programme for modernisation and mechanisation of agriculture, a project has been undertaken at a cost of Tk 1.5 billion. The farmers will be able to procure farming machineries at 25 percent reduced price through this programme. The incentives given for the cultivation of Boro and Aus paddy as well as jute have been the first such instance in the country and will have a positive impact on agricultural production.

70. Quality seed is a precondition for increased production of crops. A target has been set to produce 31% additional quality seeds compared to the previous year. A project is being implemented to produce and distribute good quality seeds of rice, wheat, jute, pulse, oil and onion at the farmers' level. Under the project, 81,569 metric tons of seeds including 67,231 metric tons of paddy seeds have been

distributed during 2009-10 fiscal year. A total of 103,572 metric tons of seeds including 44,417 metric tons of high yielding variety of Boro paddy were distributed during 2009-10 financial year; it constituted around 47 percent of total demand in the country. Thirty-six small irrigation projects are being implemented with an estimated outlay of Tk 3.13 billion for increasing agricultural production in the water-logged areas of the south for the first time in the country. A total of 42 'jhiri' (small fountain) embankments including 12 in the Bandarban district have been constructed for the first time this year. Plans have been adopted to irrigate 320,000 hectares of land by sinking 12,600 deep tube-wells during the Boro season this year in order to enhance agricultural production in the northern region of the country, i.e. Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions.

71. Research programmes are being implemented to overcome the adverse impacts of climate change, invent crop varieties resilient to floods, droughts, salinity, and extreme heat. In the meantime, 5 salinity-tolerant and 2 submergence-tolerant paddy varieties have been released for the Aman and Boro season. A model to alleviate the problems caused by drought through use of BRRI-33 variety of paddy has been developed for the drought-prone areas of the northern region. Adaptation experiments are being conducted on drought-tolerant and short-duration variety of hybrid paddy called Nerica-1 from Africa. Re-excavation of canals and ponds is being continued in some of the districts of Rajshahi division for preservation of rain water on land-surface.

72. Per unit crop production has increased as a result of farmer-friendly programmes of the government as well as proper application of balanced fertilizer, quality seeds and timely irrigation by the farmers. A total of 34,260,000 metric tons of rice and 1,049,000 metric tons of wheat were produced during the 2009-10 fiscal year. The outputs of rice and wheat were 34,218,000 metric tons and 958,000 metric tons respectively during 2008-09 fiscal year. In other words, total food production (rice and wheat) has increased by 123,000 metric tons in 2009-10 compared to the previous year. Similarly, the output of potato has risen to 1,654,000 metric tons. Both the production and cultivation area of jute have increased. The procurement prices of paddy and rice have been enhanced by the government. As a result, the farmers got fair prices for their products and were encouraged to produce more crops. The cash incentives for private entrepreneurs exporting potato have been increased to 20% from the previous 10%.

73. Multi-pronged measures have been initiated for achieving self-sufficiency in food production in accordance with the government's commitments, especially for meeting the protein needs of the greater population. During 2010-11, an allocation of Tk 3.57 billion has been made for 41 projects and Tk 848.6 million for another 12 programmes, which are being implemented in the fisheries and livestock sector in order to groom a healthy, perceptive and innovative nation through supply of animal protein and nutrition by increasing the production of fish, meat, egg and milk. Among these, important projects and programmes in the fisheries sector are: recovery of natural fish breeding area of Halda river; extension of fisheries technology at the union

level; development of identified and obsolete water-bodies; programme for preventing the catching of Jatka (small) fish and increasing the production of Hilsa through rehabilitation of fishermen during the Jatka season; creation of sanctuary for fish; fisheries cultivation in flood-plains and haor areas (marshes); increasing production and preventing the extinction of indigenous varieties of fish, such as, Gutom, Rani, Kholshey, Kajali, Batashi, Chanda, etc.; imparting training to fishermen on cultivation of fish by using modern and scientific methods through setting up of nurseries in open water-bodies and by releasing fish fries; increasing fish production through innovation of new technology; and above all, making all-out efforts for ensuring availability of fish for the people. A new shrimp research centre has already been established at Bagerhat for increasing the export of shrimps by maintaining its quality. Ultra-modern LC-MS-MS machine has been installed at the fisheries quality control laboratory of Dhaka and GC-MS-MS machines have been installed at the quality control laboratories of Chittagong and Khulna. Besides, steps have been taken to groom skilled fisheries manpower by setting up fisheries diploma institutes at Chandpur, Gopalganj, Sirajganj and Kishorganj districts and introducing fisheries diploma courses. ID cards have been issued in favour of fishermen and measures are being taken for tackling the risks associated with climate change. As a result of these numerous programmes, the production and supply of shrimps, Hilsa and other fishes have increased.

74. Notable among the projects and programmes taken for livestock development include: avian influenza preparedness and response project, up-gradation of breed

through progeny test, expansion of artificial breeding programme and embryo transfer technology, buffalo development project, development of Red Chittagong Cattle, beef breed development programme in Bangladesh and initiative for grooming skilled animal husbandry and veterinary surgeons through setting up of Jhenidah Veterinary College. By involving the country's poor population in these projects and programmes, mechanisms have been put in place for the growth of fisheries and livestock and increase in the supply of protein in the country. Because of these gigantic efforts, progress has been achieved in poverty alleviation and employment generation of the people: advances have especially been made in women's empowerment by directly involving the women community in development activities. Due to appropriate measures taken by the present government, it has been possible to contain the spread of anthrax. Steps have been taken for setting up an international standard bio-safety level-2 plus reference laboratory for detecting bird flu, and detection and elimination of avian influenza in remote areas of the country through SMS Gateway System technology as a part of building a Digital Bangladesh. Fisheries Information and Communication Centres (FICC) have been established under the e-Extension Service for Need-based Aquaculture programme in 1 union each of 10 upazilas under 10 districts within the purview of A2I project of the Prime Minister's Office. The Fisheries and Livestock Act, 2010 has been framed with the goal of fisheries and livestock development. All-out initiatives have been taken for implementing hasp and traceability regulations at all levels from shrimp producers up to the consumers under the quality control programme set by the European Union and

the USA. During 2009-10, an amount of Tk 28.85 billion was earned by exporting 51,540 metric tons of shrimp; overall, Tk 34.08 billion was earned by exporting 77,584 metric tons of fish and fish products including shrimps. Besides, the image of the country has been brightened in the international arena following declaration of Bangladesh as a country free from rinderpest disease by the international body World Organization for Animal Health due to government's successes in ridding the country of this disease.

(D) Social Safety Net

Mr. Speaker,

75. The government has placed enormous emphasis on social safety net programmes. The rates of various allowances and the number of beneficiaries in these programmes have been increased significantly in order to bring down the poverty rate to 15% within 2021. As a result, the proportion of allocation for the social safety net and empowerment sector in the total budget stands at 15.2% (2.5% of GDP) in the current year's budget. Overall, the size of social safety net coverage has expanded compared to previous times. Total allocation for this sector during 2010-11 financial year stands at Tk 194.97 billion. Twenty-one ministries/divisions are associated with 87 programmes in this field. Total number of beneficiaries currently stands at 48.1 million. Financial and commodity assistance are being provided to the poor and disadvantaged population through these programmes. Although these large-sized programmes used to be taken up by various ministries in the past, they

were not implemented in a coordinated fashion. The present government has therefore constituted a central monitoring committee headed by the Cabinet Secretary for coordinated monitoring of these programmes. It is now possible to monitor these programmes executed by relevant ministries/divisions more closely. Besides, two committees headed by the Deputy Commissioners and Upazila Nirbahi Officers have been set up at district and upazila levels respectively for selection of beneficiaries in the social safety net programmes and to avoid duplications in beneficiary selection. Alongside provision of social safety net, these programmes are playing an effective role in boosting production and development. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics has been assigned the task of determining the actual number of beneficiaries in the social safety net programmes by conducting a survey and also ascertaining the number of beneficiaries who really deserve to get benefits under these programmes.

Mr. Speaker,

76. Programmes are being implemented including those directed towards poverty alleviation, human resource development and social safety net coverage of the aged, widows, disabled, orphans, destitute and other backward segments of the country's population. Different programmes are being run throughout the country including those for correction of juvenile delinquents, rehabilitation of socially disabled girls, bringing up, educating, training and rehabilitating distressed and helpless children, rehabilitation of vagrants, social services in hospitals and provision of secure shelters.

77. The government has allocated Tk 8.91 billion for the old age allowance programme, Tk 1.029 billion for the insolvent disabled allowance programme, Tk 3.312 billion for the allowance for widow programme and Tk 88 million for the educational stipend programme of disabled students.

78. Massive programmes are being implemented for skill development of women through intensive training, generation of employment opportunities, ensuring participation in the labour market, and economic empowerment by providing patronisation to small and medium enterprises. Side by side, other programmes are being executed for inclusion of the poor, distressed, widows and deserted women in the social safety net. Notable among these are: allowance for widows, maternity allowance, Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) (NNP), VGE-UP and micro-credit programme for poverty alleviation. The number of beneficiaries and the amount of allowance for widows as well as maternity allowance recipients have been enhanced during 2009-10 fiscal year. The number of beneficiaries in 'allowance for widows' programme has been increased by 20,000 to 920,000. The monthly allowance has been raised to Tk 300 from Tk 250. Similarly, the number of maternity allowance recipients has been increased to 80 thousand; presently, a total of 88 thousand pregnant mothers, 17 from each union, are being paid monthly allowances at the rate of Tk 350 per month.

79. Under the VGD programme, 750 thousand women living below the poverty line are being given 30 kg rice/wheat or 25 kg nutritious flour each month. Tk 300 million has been allocated for a programme titled

'Assistance to lactating working mothers' during 2010-11 financial year. Steps have been taken for the first time to provide Tk 350 per head as maternity allowance to pregnant working mothers in urban areas. Under the credit for poverty alleviation programme, each woman is being given up to Tk 15 thousand as loan to be repaid in 12 instalments with 5% interest within 2 years; till now, 71 thousand beneficiaries have been provided with this credit facility. A fund of Tk 20 million has been created for assisting helpless women and children. One-time assistance is provided to distressed women and children from profits derived from this fund. Till now, assistance worth Tk 26.3 million has been distributed among 12,734 persons from this fund. Besides, the number of day-care centres has been increased. Till now, 29 day-care centres for children are being run through government initiative. Under the food security programme for poor women (VGD-UP), Tk 576.3 million has been distributed among 80,000 hardcore poor women at the rate of Tk 400 per head. At the same time, income generating resources worth Tk 306.1 million have been distributed among 48,820 women after imparting them with income-generating training. Ordinary, special and discretionary grants worth Tk 54.2 million have been distributed among 2,622 women's associations.

80. A project titled 'Rural Employment Opportunity for Public Assets' (REOPA) having an estimated outlay of Tk 2.84 billion is being implemented with the goal of making distressed women self-reliant. Opportunities have been created for employment generation of 24,444 distressed women, generation of public wealth and maintenance work in the rural areas through this programme.

Mr. Speaker,

81. The government is implementing various programmes throughout the country for providing food and social security, including reduction of damages caused by disasters. Employment generation programme for the unemployed hardcore poor, food for work and test relief programmes are being continued. Food security programmes like VGF, VGD etc. are also being implemented. During 2009-10, these programmes generated employment opportunities for 6.43 million poor people. Employment generation programme of 100 days for 1.33 million hardcore poor is being implemented at a cost of Tk 10 billion during the current financial year throughout the country. Side by side, TR and Food for Works programmes are being executed with an allocation of 764,300 metric tons of food-grain worth Tk 18.45 billion. On the other hand, 26,450 metric tons of GR (gratuitous relief) rice and GR cash of Tk 128.8 million have been distributed among the destitute families of the 16 coastal districts devastated by cyclone 'Aila'; 13,420 metric tons of VGF rice have been distributed among 48 thousand families of 4 upazilas in Khulna and Satkhira districts, who were most adversely affected by the cyclone. Housing grants totalling Tk 300 million were distributed among the families seriously affected by cyclone 'Aila'; a total of Tk 960 million (Tk 20,000 per family) were distributed among 48 thousand families who had taken refuge on embankments in 4 upazilas of Khulna and Satkhira districts. There is no such precedence of helping the disaster-affected people from the government's own fund without taking recourse to foreign assistance. Out of a sanctioned amount of Tk 56.1 million for housing assistance

to rehabilitate the families adversely affected by natural disasters during the current financial year, Tk 20 million has already been disbursed.

Mr. Speaker,

82. The government has attached highest priority to food security of the people. Although Bangladesh could make much progress in food production, food security is being hampered due to the extra pressure of population. On the other hand, adverse impacts are also being observed due to climate change. The trend of unstable and high prices of food-grain observed globally during 2007-08 still prevails. As a result, ensuring food security has become a big challenge. The government has taken multifarious measures for increasing food-grain production in order to face this challenge. At the same time, required food-grains are being imported from abroad for building a safety reserve. The coverage of public food distribution system (PFDS) has been widened for raising food security, especially of the poorer segments. The official stock of food-grain also has to be increased because of population growth and expansion of PFDS coverage. With this goal, storage capacity of government food warehouses will be increased to 2.2 million metric tons from the current 1.5 million metric tons within the next 5 years. As part of this programme, the construction work of warehouses having a storage capacity of 110 thousand metric tons in North Bengal will be completed during the current fiscal year. Besides, construction work of warehouses having total storage capacity of 135 thousand metric tons is now going on in the country. In accordance with plan, warehouses having storage

capacity of 434 thousand metric tons and 4 Silos with storage capacity of another 400 thousand metric tons will be built. The government has started open market sale (OMS) of rice and introduced 'fair price cards' in order to ensure availability of food among low income and poorer citizens. A total of over 1.1 million fair price cards have been distributed throughout the country with the help of local public representatives and elites. Families holding these cards get 20 kg of rice per month at a fixed price. An allocation of 0.55 million metric tons of food-grains have been made for distribution through 'OMS' and 'fair price cards' during the current financial year. As a result of this distribution, the poorer segments of population have been saved from the high prices of food-grains. Plans have been undertaken for distribution of 1.78 million metric tons of food-grain in the food-security sector during 2010-11 financial year; this is more than double the amount distributed in 2007-08.

83. Bangladesh Country Investment Plan (BCIP) has been formulated for building a sustainable food security system in the light of Food Policy Action Plan for ensuring food security of the people. This plan has been drafted by involving 11 relevant ministries. The plan was highly acclaimed at the 'Asia Pacific Food Security Investment Forum' held in Manila in July 2010 and the meeting of 'World Food Security Committee' held in Rome in October 2010. Bangladesh was cited as an 'exemplary' and 'showcase' country at both these international meetings. Avenues for obtaining food assistance from the global fund and other organizations have been opened up due to formulation of this plan. Already, a grant of around Tk 3.7 billion (US \$

52.5 million) has been received from the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP) of the World Bank.

84. Under the purview of social safety net coverage, 1000 cancer patients were given Tk 50 thousand each (total Tk 50 million) through the project titled 'Support Services Programme for Vulnerable Groups (SSPVG)'. The poor students of Lillah Boarding Orphanage, Ramkrishna Mission, Buddhist Monastery and Math were sanctioned Tk 60 million and another Tk 20 million were allocated for infrastructure development of these institutions. Tk 70 million was disbursed among the poor and unemployed labourers of tea gardens. Apart from an allocation of Tk 293.3 million for the 16,320 inhabitants of government children's homes, capitation grant of Tk 420 million was allocated for the private orphanages.

85. A special programme titled 'Services and Assistance Centre for the Disabled' was taken up, initially in 5 districts of the country, during 2009-10 financial year with an outlay of Tk 54.1 million and having the objective of providing physiotherapy and other clinical assistance to disabled population of the country. This programme is being expanded to 10 other districts during 2010-11 financial year, at an expenditure of Tk 94.5 million. Till now, over 10 thousand disabled people have been rendered therapy and other medical assistance free of cost under this programme. A project titled 'Rehabilitation of People Engaged in Begging and Alternative Employment Programme' having an outlay of Tk 62.3 million is being implemented for assisting the disabled people involved in the dishonourable profession of begging. The government has started a 'Child

Development Centre Programme' to bring back the distressed, disadvantaged and street children to the fold of a secure and normal life through education and training. A total of 1500 children are being rehabilitated under this project. Besides, an allocation of Tk 92.64 million has been made in favour of Social Welfare Council for encouraging voluntary social welfare-oriented institutions and implementing the programme for poverty alleviation through self-employment.

86. The Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) formed by the government is running its programmes through various private associate organizations with the goal of poverty alleviation of the poor. Since 2009, PKSF has disbursed loan amounting to a total of Tk 32.24 billion among 11.5 million poor people with the objective of generating self-employment in rural and urban areas through 194 big and small associate organizations. Ninety-two percent of them were women. Besides, training on income generation was imparted to 52,530 beneficiaries in relevant districts in order to eliminate Monga (seasonal unemployment). Till now, PKSF has distributed Tk 240.5 million for rehabilitation and reconstruction of houses of people adversely affected by the onslaught of cyclones 'Sidr' and 'Aila'.

87. The government has constituted the Social Development Foundation with the goal of creating additional social and infrastructure facilities and enhancing local level institutional capacities for the benefit of poorer segments of the country's population. As a follow-up to the satisfactory progress of its 'Social investment programme'

project' (SIPP), another programme titled 'New life SIPP-2' has been taken up by the foundation at an expenditure of US \$ 111.5 million (around Tk 8.22 billion). Under this project, around 500 thousand hardcore poor will be directly benefited and 3 million people will get indirect benefits in 1,500 villages of 26 upazilas in the districts of Jamalpur, Gaibandha, Sirajganj, Bagerhat, Barguna, Patuakhali, Pirojpur, Mymensingh, Sherpur, Rangpur, Kurigram and Dinajpur.

Mr. Speaker,

88. The present government is implementing various programmes and projects for overall welfare of the valiant freedom fighters. The government has enhanced the number of beneficiaries and rate of allowances for insolvent freedom fighters twice. Presently, around 150 thousand freedom fighters are being given monthly honorariums of Tk 2 thousand per head (total Tk 3.6 billion). State honorarium for martyrs' families has been enhanced to Tk 7020 from Tk 5850. Besides, state honorariums given to war-wounded freedom fighters in 6 categories have been raised by 10 percent in all the categories. The annual increase of expenditure in this area has been around Tk 610 million. Moreover, 7,838 families including the war-wounded freedom fighters, families of the martyred, families and expired war-wounded freedom fighters, families of the 7 'Bir Sreshthas' and Taraman Bibi Bir Pratik, who receive state honorariums under the purview of Bangladesh Freedom Fighters' Welfare Trust have been brought under the rationing programme similar to the one implemented for the police force. It may be mentioned that the present

government has handed over abandoned houses at rates fixed in 1972 to 142 families of war-wounded and martyred freedom fighters in order to provide them with housing facility. The retirement age of freedom fighters serving in the government has been raised to 59 years from 57. The present government has also decided to provide employment facilities to the sons-daughters of the offspring of freedom fighters in appointments to jobs of government, semi-government and autonomous organizations.

89. Bangladesh has already achieved notable successes in tackling natural disasters, which has been acclaimed worldwide. To continue this onward march, a project titled 'Comprehensive Disaster Management Program' (2nd phase) is being implemented for mitigation of disasters from 2009-10 fiscal year at a cost of Tk 4.56 billion. With the objective of building 352 flood shelters for providing sanctuary to disaster-affected people, construction of 74 flood shelters have been completed during 2009-10 fiscal year. The remaining work for constructing 178 flood shelters and 100 multipurpose cyclone shelters will start from January of current financial year. A total of 465 bridges/culverts have been constructed during the last fiscal year as part of efforts for rural infrastructure development in 466 upazilas of the country's plain-land through government funding. Construction of another 466 bridges/culverts will be completed this year at a cost of Tk 914.3 million. Implementation of a project for constructing 123 small bridges/culverts on the rural roads of Chittagong Hill Tracts at a cost of Tk 991 million has been started. This kind of project for the hilly area is something new. A total of 6,186 cyclone-resistant homes are being built in the coastal

districts of Khulna, Barisal and Chittagong region with government funding of Tk 732.4 million from the Climate Change Trust Fund.

90. Some regions of Bangladesh including Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet are vulnerable to the risks of earthquake. Search and rescue equipments worth Tk 699 million have already been procured and handed over for use during rescue operations in the aftermath of any possible earthquake. Procurement of another lot of equipments worth Tk 450 million is also being finalised. A programme has been undertaken to mobilise 62,000 volunteers in the earthquake-prone cities to assist rescue operation in the aftermath of any earthquake. Arrangements have been made for publicising information on impending disasters through mobile phones. Besides, steps have been taken for launching a web-portal for giving advance warning signals and information on disaster and post-disaster mapping. Vital documents in disaster management like the revised version of Standing Orders on Disaster and National Disaster Management Plan (2010-15) have been approved at a meeting of the National Disaster Management Council chaired by Honourable Prime Minister on 7 April 2010. It is hoped that the stated measures will play an effective role in mitigation of risks in the light of new outlook and strategies for disaster management.

91. New earthquake observatories have been set up in Rangpur and Sylhet and the earthquake observatory at Chittagong has been modernised at a cost of Tk 176 million under the Development of Seismological Services (Revised) Project. Weather forecasting centres have been established

at Ashuganj, Narsingdi, Louhajang, Hijla, Ramgati, Monpura, Kaukhali, Koira, Shahjadpur, Shibaloy, Chandpur, Barisal and Patuakhali at a cost of Tk 257.7 million for ensuring safety of life and property through forecasts of storms and tornadoes.

92. Cyclones, tidal surges, tornadoes, floods, droughts etc. cause huge damage to life and property in Bangladesh each year. Two Doppler radars are being replaced and necessary infrastructures are being built at Cox's Bazar and Khepupara at a cost of Tk 1291.6 million under the Improvement of Meteorological Radar System at Cox's Bazar & Khepupara project in order to curb damages as much as possible through enhancement of weather forecasting capacity and more reliable forecasts about natural disasters like cyclones, floods, excessive rains, tornadoes, etc. A new radar station and required infrastructure are being constructed at Moulvibazar at a cost of Tk 864.4 million under the 'Establishment of Meteorological Radar System at Moulvibazar' project. Five first class weather observatories will be set up at Panchagarh, Khagrachhari, Bandarban, Kishorganj and Cox's Bazar at a cost of Tk 244.5 million. In accordance with the declaration of the Honourable Prime Minister, a project has been taken up for constructing fire stations at 156 upazilas which lack fire services based on plans to build at least one fire station in each upazila. Various fire fighting equipments including sky lift and water-carrying vehicles have been procured in order to strengthen the Fire Service Department.

Mr. Speaker,

93. The present government is working hard to strengthen the local government system. The Upazila Parishad Act, 1998 (amended on 30 June 2010) has been made effective. Within the purview of this law, Upazila Parishad Business Rule, 2010, Upazila Chairman and Vice Chairman (Responsibilities, Duties and Financial Benefits) Rules, 2010, Upazila Parishad Budget Preparation and Approval Rules, 2010, Upazila Parishad Contract Rules, 2010 and Upazila Parishad Asset Transfer, Maintenance and Management Rules, 2010 have been framed. The Local Government (Municipality) Act, 2009, The Local Government (City Corporation) Act, 2009 and The Local Government (Union Parishad) Act, 2009 have been passed by the Ninth Parliament. The websites of the Local Government Division and all departments/organizations/institutions under this Division have been updated in a timely manner. A website has been put up by the Local Government Division as a partner in the implementation of a digital Bangladesh declared by the government, which is being updated regularly. GIS database system has been launched in 350 upazilas out of 482. Work is progressing on preparing a database on water supply and sanitation situation in rural and urban areas. Computerised tax management has been introduced in 108 municipalities. Besides, formulation of a digital master plan for all municipalities is under process.

94. The Local Governance Support Project (LGSP) is being implemented with a view to making the local government institutions, especially the Union Parishads,

more efficient and powerful and establishing transparency and accountability in their operations through decentralisation of financial powers, ensuring people's participation in the formulation and implementation of plans and preparation of budgets. A total of 3,350 Union Parishads throughout the country have been included in this project during 2009-10 fiscal year. There is a plan to bring 4,484 Union Parishads under this project during 2010-11 fiscal year. The project is playing a vital role in establishing good governance and poverty reduction at the local level, expediting local development and establishing participatory democracy at the grassroots. Besides, initiative has been taken to transform the village courts established at Union Parishads into effective and genuine service provider institutions by delivering justice to the doorsteps of the marginal population through a project titled 'Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh'.

95. Around 80% of tube-wells in 8,540 villages of 271 upazilas in 61 districts of Bangladesh are polluted by Arsenic. A total of 45,712 sources of arsenic-free water have been erected since the assumption of office by the present government. As a result, one water source for every 95 persons could be ensured in the rural areas and the coverage of water could be raised to 87%. A target has been set for erecting another 200 thousand arsenic-free sources of water in the rural areas of the country and expansion of water supply network in 127 municipalities within 2013. Keeping in mind the target of 100 percent sanitation coverage by the year 2013 as declared by the government, 90.56 percent of this target could be achieved until now, which is the highest among SAARC countries. Already, 100% sanitation target

has been attained in 5 districts, 58 municipalities, 114 upazilas and 1387 unions. The water supply and sanitation authorities (WASA) are working to ensure proper management of the sector in Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna cities. An initiative has been taken to supply 300 million litres of additional water to Mirpur of Dhaka by digging wells at Singair of Manikganj and Tentuljhara-Bhakurta of Savar. Besides, initiative has been taken to implement the construction of water purification projects at Pagla/Keraniganj, Khilkhet and Sayeedabad. The Karnaphuli water supply project and water treatment rehabilitation projects at Mohra and Kalurghat in the area covered by Chittagong WASA are being executed. Steps have been taken for implementing the improvement of water supply and sanitation project in Chittagong with assistance from the World Bank. The newly formed Khulna WASA and Rajshahi WASA have started functioning.

Mr. Speaker,

96. The present government has geared up poverty alleviation of the poorer segments of population in the rural areas, implementation of cooperative-based programmes and applied research on rural development on a continuous basis. Cooperatives have also been accorded recognition by Bangladesh Constitution as the second sector of asset ownership. The government has undertaken extensive reformative and development programmes for bringing dynamism and ensuring transparency and accountability in the cooperative programmes. Milk-Vita has been transformed into a profitable organization by eliminating financial irregularities and administrative corruption to a

great extent. The cooperative members are being imparted training on various income generating activities in order to generate employment and reduce poverty. A project titled 'Development of Pottery Cooperative Societies in Bangladesh' has been implemented by the Department of Cooperatives with the objective of poverty alleviation through revival of the lost glory of pottery industry in the country, imparting training on skill development to pottery artisans, improved production techniques and entrepreneurship development. As a part of the commitment of the present government towards development of the living standard of the backward and small ethnic groups, a project titled 'Improvement of the Living Standard of the Garo Community' is being implemented for the Garos at Haluaghat and Dhobaura upazilas of Mymensingh district, Modhupur upazila of Tangail district, Kalmakanda and Durgapur upazilas of Netrakona district and Jhenaigati upazila of Sherpur district.

97. Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) has constituted 173,861 cooperative associations and informal groups till today under various poverty alleviation programmes; the number of members/beneficiaries in these units total 5,338,528. Their total capital stands at Tk 5.91 billion, disbursed credit at Tk 81.55 billion and loan recovery rate at 94%. At present, BRDB has taken up special projects for poverty-prone areas and programmes for environmental conservation through appropriate and sustainable technology. The 'Small Farmers' Development Foundation' is running assistance programmes including extension of micro-credit to small farmers without security deposits. In the light of election pledges of the present

government, a 5-year long credit programme has been formulated by this organization to distribute Tk 3.68 billion as micro-credit among 120 thousand members during the period 2009-14.

98. The present government had started the implementation of 'One house, one farm' project during its previous tenure (1996-2001). As a continuation of this, the implementation of the project has been restarted for the period July 2009 to June 2014 at an estimated cost of Tk 11.97 billion. The main aims of the project are to build dwelling houses as separate economic units, create village organizations and ensure village development through them, provide various assistance/services to the beneficiaries by establishing contacts between the local government and nation-building bodies with the village organizations, ensure mobilisation of local resources and their desired usage for overall development. Under the project, the beneficiaries are being rendered post-training assistance alongside transfer of assets. The Honourable Prime Minister had inaugurated the asset transfer of beneficiaries on 6 November 2010.

99. The 'Char Livelihood Project' is being implemented for the period July 2003 to June 2011 at a cost of Tk 6675 million for improving the quality of life and livelihood of 1 million people living in poverty-stricken chars (shoals) of Brahmaputra river, in 150 unions of 28 upazilas under 5 districts (Kurigram, Gaibandha, Jamalpur, Sirajganj and Bogra). Massive programmes have been implemented under the project up to 31 March 2010, including distribution of 67,896 cows, raising the floor of 90,377 dwelling houses, construction of 62,203 latrines, digging of 1,469 shallow

tube-wells, installation of 3,484 pucca (cemented) tube-wells, construction of 364.50 kilometres of earthen roads, construction of 13 culverts and 11 u-drains, repair of 12 schools/madrasas, establishing gardens on the compounds of 90,879 dwelling houses, distribution of 2,59,267 tree saplings, distribution of high quality seeds among 100,743 families, vaccination of 178,929 cattle, imparting training on home-gardening to 185,253 persons, imparting training on production of organic fertilizer to 106,543 persons, and operation of 15,612 clinics. Implementation of the project titled 'Economic Empowerment of the Poorest in Bangladesh' is being implemented during the period February 2008 to December 2015 at an expenditure of Tk 8.7 billion for socio-economic development by reducing the poverty of 1 million hardcore poor of Bangladesh within 2015, targeting people living in chars (shoals), haors (marshes), water-logged areas, cyclone-prone coastal regions, drought-affected areas of North Bengal, extremely poverty-stricken regions due to lack of employment during lean seasons, and small ethnic groups who are deprived of social, cultural and environmental rights.

100. The villages have been undivided entities since time immemorial. Despite changes in professions and disappearance of many trades, close social, cultural and economic bonds still exist among the village-people. This bondage is the greatest capital for development of villages through participation of all. The government has taken up a programme for overall development of the villages by putting into practice the 'one village one association' concept through maintaining the unique characteristics of villages. The main aims of this programme include bringing about

socio-economic development and poverty alleviation in villages through participation of all men and women irrespective of age, class, profession and financial condition. In the first phase, the project has been implemented in 1,575 villages of 21 upazilas under 19 districts. In the second phase, the project is being executed in 4,275 villages of 66 upazilas under 64 districts of the country. Initiative has been taken to implement the project on a bigger scale throughout the country.

101. As there were no training institutes on rural development and poverty reduction in the south-western part of the country, the Bangabandhu Poverty Alleviation Training Complex had commenced functioning in 1997 as a project pledged by the Honourable Prime Minister. Later, this institute could not function in accordance with its objectives due to hostility and regional disparity exercised after the change of government. The complex continued its programmes on a limited scale on its own initiative. Taking into account the shape of poverty, agricultural diversity, local natural resources etc. of the south-western region, a project for expansion, renovation and modernisation of Bangabandhu Poverty Alleviation Training Complex has been taken up for converting the existing institute into a full-fledged national level training cum research institute for undertaking extensive research and training on rural development and poverty reduction. The project is under implementation from March 2009 to June 2012 at an estimated cost of Tk 30 billion. The main objectives of the project include applied training for raising agricultural production and food security, and setting up of agriculture,

fisheries and livestock farms for demonstration and research in the expanded area.

102. The Palli Daridra Bimochan Foundation (PDBF or Rural Poverty Alleviation Foundation) was set up in 1999 by the then Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 9 July 2000. The PDBF has been able to make notable contributions to effective micro-credit programmes, leadership development, social development training and women's empowerment by organizing the disadvantaged people in the rural areas. With the slogan 'Electricity for all', PDBF has started solar power projects for reaching electricity to various regions of the country, especially the poverty-stricken backward ones. It is now getting a chance to contribute towards national development by producing an average of 435 KW/H of electricity per day through installation of solar home systems.

Mr. Speaker,

103. The export of skilled manpower from the country is making a special contribution to socio-economic development and poverty alleviation by reducing unemployment. It is increasing the country's foreign exchange reserve by earning foreign currency and facilitating payments for imports. Side by side, superior technologies are getting transferred through expatriate workers. Many countries had imposed ban on recruitment of Bangladeshi workers due to corruption and mismanagement of the erstwhile government. Those countries have now started employing Bangladeshi workers anew. Between January 2009 and December 2010, a total of 865,980

Bangladeshi workers got overseas employment. At present, they are employed in 132 countries of the world. Because of global economic recession, efforts are underway to sustain the trend of manpower exports by sending workers to other countries in addition to the traditional destinations. In this respect, workers have been sent to Lebanon, Sudan, Poland, Romania, Botswana, Congo, Mauritius, Algeria and Tajikistan.

104. The government has taken up various programmes to send skilled workers abroad. Programmes are being implemented for grooming workers in 48 trades through 38 technical training centres. Initiative has been taken for sending workers in greater numbers each year by establishing additional 35 technical training centres, with at least 1 technical training centre in each district. Alongside males, female domestic workers are also being sent abroad after imparting them with 21 days' special training.

Mr. Speaker,

105. A total of 58 thousand unemployed youths have been imparted technical training during the past two years through 26 technical training centres with the objective of alleviating poverty. Six technical training centres for women have been established at 6 divisional headquarters with the goal of involving the country's womenfolk in productive activities. A total of 4,320 women are being trained in 2 shifts on 6 to 10 trades at each of these centres. The 'Elimination of Child Labour Policy' has been formulated and a project is underway with government funding for elimination of child labour in hazardous jobs. Forty

thousand working children have already been imparted non-formal education including skill development training through this project. A project titled 'Urban informal economy programme to support the time-bound programme towards the elimination of worst forms of child labour in Bangladesh' is being implemented at a cost of Tk 714 million. Through this project, 55,000 child workers of Dhaka metropolitan area have been saved from working in hazardous jobs, 26,000 working children were imparted non-formal education, 13,000 children were imparted technical education and parents of 29,000 child workers were given micro-credit for the purpose of employment. A child labour unit has been set up at the Ministry of Labour and Employment under this project, which will later serve as the secretariat for elimination of child labour in Bangladesh; it will also perform all tasks related to coordination of relevant information and publication including preparation of database. The retirement age of workers in the state-owned sector has been raised to 60 years from 57 years by amending some sections of Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 and passage of Bangladesh Labour Act, 2010.

106. The present government has already declared minimum wages for 14 private industrial sectors and the declaration of minimum wages for another 7 sectors is under process. Very recently, the amended wage structure for readymade garments sector has been announced, which increased the salary of workers by 82% and which has been made effective from November 2010. The draft of a time-befitting and modern National Labour Policy, 2010 has been finalised after a gap of 30 years. Initiative has been taken for amending the Bangladesh Labour Welfare Foundation Act,

2006 for upholding workers' interests. The Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 has been amended and enforced in the country from 11 November 2009 for consolidating the welfare and management of dockyard workers. Besides, steps have been taken for amending the Road Transport Workers' Welfare Board Act, 2005 for the private sector. Amendment of Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 for making it time-befitting is also in the final stage. The draft of 'Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy, 2010 has been finalised for according recognition to the sizeable workforce engaged in domestic work and to ensure their protection and welfare. As part of the process of improving relations with the ILO, Bangladesh has been included as a lead country for YEN (Youth Employment Network) with the goal of generating employment, ensuring welfare and creating opportunities for the youths.

107. The National Wages and Productivity Commission, 2010 has been formed to fix wages of workers employed in nationalised, autonomous and semi-autonomous industries. A 22-member National Industrial Health and Safety council headed by the Honourable Minister for Labour and Employment has been constituted for ensuring occupational safety and health of workers of the industrial sector. The draft of the 'National Occupational Health and Safety Policy, 2010' has been finalised. A core committee for crisis management headed by Honourable State Minister for Labour and Employment has been formed with inclusion of various government bodies for upholding security and discipline in the garments sector. Besides, five regional Committees headed by concerned Members of Parliament have been formed in areas of high labour concentration.

Alongside maintaining discipline in the garments industry, these committees will play a role in expediting social development and economic growth in the country. With the objective of reducing traffic jam and conserving power in Dhaka, weekly holidays have been fixed for shops/markets/shopping malls located in Dhaka city by dividing the city into 7 zones based on locations.

Mr. Speaker,

108. A large proportion of the population of Bangladesh is women and children. The government has been running various programmes for establishing the rights of women and children, their empowerment, and for involving them in the mainstream of development efforts. Massive programmes are being implemented for raising the skills of womenfolk, creating employment opportunity and wider participation in the labour market through intensive training, as well as economic empowerment by patronizing small and medium entrepreneurs. Gender-based budgets were prepared by 4 ministries (education, health and family welfare, social welfare, and food and disaster management) for the first time during 2009-10 fiscal year in order to specifically ensure participation of women in various programmes. As a continuation of this process, gender-based budgets were prepared by 10 ministries during 2010-11 financial year.

109. The 'Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2010' has been formulated with the objectives of establishing equal rights in all spheres of state and public life and eliminating all forms of discrimination. The National Council for Women and Children's Development

(NCWCD) headed by the Honourable Prime Minister has been reconstituted for evaluating and monitoring progress in women's development. Important guidelines were given at the first meeting of the council chaired by the Honourable Prime Minister on 22 April 2010. A draft of the 'National Children Policy 2011' has been prepared with the goal of adopting a time-befitting policy for children. View exchange meetings have been held at district, divisional and national levels for finalising it; opinions of the people were also obtained through website. The policy will be finalised very soon. A National DNA Profiling Laboratory having ultramodern technology has been established at Dhaka Medical College under the multi-sectoral programme on preventing repression of women; Divisional DNA Screening Laboratories have also been set up at government medical colleges of 5 divisional towns. Besides, one-stop crisis centres have been established at 6 government medical college hospitals located in divisional headquarters. The seventh such centre has been set up at Rangpur Medical College Hospital. The duration of maternity leave for female government officers/employees has been raised to 6 months from 4 months. Rallies and human chains have been organised throughout the country for building awareness against eve-teasing. A human-chain programme was simultaneously observed in 64 districts of the country on 2 December 2010 as a part of observing the women's repression prevention fortnight.

110. The offices of district women's officers in four districts of divisional headquarters, viz. Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chittagong and Khulna have been given internet facilities for taking swift actions to prevent violence against women.

Required forms for getting services from any place of the country have been uploaded on the website of Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. A project has been approved for publishing juvenile books for children on the life and works of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. A total of 8,058 child education centres are being run at various places of the country for providing pre-primary education to children. Encyclopedia of science for children has been published by attaching due importance to science education. A project for constructing buildings of Bangladesh Shishu (Children) Academy in 6 districts, namely, Patuakhali, Gopalganj, Faridpur, Khagrachhari, Jhenidah and Narsingdi, has been approved. Life-skills training are being imparted to teenage children on childhood marriage, eve-teasing, dowry, child-rights, livelihoods, tackling disasters, swimming, etc. through 2,860 clubs in 29 districts under the 'Empowerment and protection of children' project. Around 15,000 children in 'Aila'-affected areas are being provided with basic services in a child-friendly environment and acid-victim children are being given psycho-social counselling. Sixty children of mothers imprisoned in Dhaka central jail are being imparted education in a child-friendly atmosphere at pre-primary schools and child development centres. Children's corners have been set up at Osmani Park and Bangladesh Shishu Academy, and a butterfly sculpture has been installed for children at Gulshan-Taltola Park.

111. A total of 1,030 poor, unemployed and insolvent women of urban areas have been imparted training on skill development in various trades and vocations for creating opportunities for self-employment through 13 training

centres in 6 districts including Dhaka under the urban-based marginal women development programme of Jatiya Mohila Sangstha (National Women's Organization). A display cum sales centre has been set up in Dhaka for exhibiting and selling handmade items produced by the trained women. The district-based computer training programme project is also being implemented by this organization. A total of 4,500 females have been imparted training between January 2009 and September 2010 under this project. Besides, micro-credit programme is being implemented for self employment of women. This organization is also imparting training to women for creating awareness and providing literacy and skill development. A project has been approved by ECNEC for building physical infrastructure in five divisional towns for curbing women repression under the assistance to women programme.

112. The Seventh South Asian Conference of Ministers was held in Dhaka on 3-5 October 2010 under the joint auspices of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and UNIFEM. The conference was attended by women affairs ministers, members of parliament and delegates of the public and private sectors from 8 South Asian countries including Bangladesh. It adopted the 'Dhaka Resolution 2010' with a pledge to strengthen the hands of regional cooperation in the South Asian countries for economic emancipation of womenfolk and establishment of their equal rights by eliminating all forms of discrimination. Bangladesh took the commonwealth gender chair in New York in February 2010. A meeting of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG) was held in Bangladesh on 6-7 December 2010. The ministers and secretaries in charge of

women affairs in commonwealth countries participated in the meeting. The International Women's Day is being observed on 8 March and the National Children's Day on 17 March, which fall on the birth anniversary of Bangabandhu. Begum Rokeya Padak (Medal) was awarded on the occasion of Begum Rokeya Day on 9 December 2010. World Children's Day and Child Rights Week are also observed.

Mr. Speaker,

113. The great liberation war was a glorious chapter in our national history. The freedom fighters of this country had participated in the liberation war by risking their lives at the clarion call of the supreme-hero of history, the greatest Bengalee of all times, the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The valiant freedom fighters are the best sons of the nation; they are our pride. The present government has been taking up and implementing various programmes for preservation of the heroic tales and glorious history, heritage and memories of the liberation war as well as ensuring overall welfare of the freedom fighters. Different projects such as the Independence Pillar (Swadhinata Stambha) project (2nd phase), establishment of a liberation war memorial centre at Mujibnagar, preservation of mass-graves and construction of monuments, preservation and development of the graveyards of freedom fighters martyred during the liberation war, preservation and development of notable places of frontal-battles during the liberation war, construction of liberation war memorial pillar, construction of a monument for the allied forces, etc. are being implemented in order to preserve the history, heritage and memories of the liberation war as well as to convey to the

new generation the true history of the liberation war. Besides, construction of freedom fighters complex buildings in all districts and upazilas and housing project for insolvent freedom fighters have been taken up for giving a lift to the living standard of freedom fighters and involving the insolvent freedom fighters in income generating activities. Initiative has been taken for construction of a modern hospital at Tejgaon of Dhaka in order to provide high-quality treatment facilities to the freedom fighters. Besides, a freedom fighters' palli (neighbourhood) is being constructed at Dhaka's Mirpur for solving the residential problems of freedom fighters. Multi-storied residential and commercial buildings are being constructed at Mohammadpur of Dhaka city for addressing the housing problems of war-wounded freedom fighters and also to provide them with financial assistance.

114. The representatives of the central command council of Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad (Bangladesh Freedom Fighters' Congress) as well as district and upazila commands were elected through a free, fair and neutral election held on 26 June 2010 by casting 'one mukti one vote' for the first time in accordance with Honourable Prime Minister's directives. Honourable Prime Minister herself conducted the oath-taking at the installation ceremony of the newly elected representatives on 27 October. Necessary arrangements are being made for preparing the database of valiant freedom fighters by using digital method. Seventy organizations under the Jatiya Muktiyoddha Council (National Freedom Fighters' Council) formed by the freedom fighters with the objective of making the insolvent freedom fighters self-reliant have been accorded registration. The mobile museum

programme of Muktijuddha Jadugar (Liberation War Museum) has been started for flourishing the spirit of liberation war among the new generation. Documentary films on the liberation war are being screened at educational institutions located in different districts and upazilas through this programme.

115. Bangladesh Freedom Fighters' Welfare Trust was constituted by the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman through the Presidential Order No. 94/1972 with the objective of ensuring the welfare and rehabilitation of the families of freedom fighters who were wounded or martyred during the glorious liberation war. At present, all-out plans have been chalked out to make the Bangladesh Freedom Fighters' Welfare Trust economically self-reliant through government initiative. It may be mentioned that a decision has been taken to waive the principal and interests of pre-independence debts of the Trust amounting to Tk 579.4 million and post-independence debts totalling Tk 118.1 million; arrangements have been made for allocation of Tk 815.1 million to implement the 'Bangladesh Freedom Fighters' Welfare Trust Recovery Plan, 2010'. As a result, the Trust will be able to repay the recovery package credit by becoming financially self-reliant from 2014 onwards. Necessary programmes have been undertaken for honouring those statesmen, politicians, philosophers, artistes-litterateurs, intellectuals, eminent citizens and organizations of various countries who made historic contributions in favour of Bangladesh's independence. With this objective, a decision has been taken to honour foreign citizens and organizations who made unforgettable contributions to the glorious liberation war on

the occasion of 40th anniversary of the country's independence and victory.

Mr. Speaker

116. The present government is working sincerely to change the lot of the inhabitants of Chittagong Hill Tracts by keeping a special focus on maintaining the dynamism/continuity of socio-economic and infrastructural development programmes in the area. Committees have been reconstituted for swift execution of unimplemented subjects as per the treaty signed by the Parbatya Chattagram Janasanghati Samity and the National Committee on Chittagong Hill Tracts on 2 December 1997. The task force on rehabilitation of refugees who returned from India and identification and rehabilitation of internally displaced people has been reorganised. In order to resolve the land disputes in the hilly region in accordance with the terms of Chittagong Hill Tracts Treaty a chairman has been appointed for the Commission on Settlement of Land Disputes.

117. The government has allocated Tk 3561.4 million for the hill districts in the current year's annual development programme. Of this, 4 projects included in the ADP will be implemented at a cost of Tk 2251.4 million; implementation of another 1 thousand development projects funded by 3 lump-sum grants/development assistance at a cost of Tk 1310 million is also going on. Under the rehabilitation programme, 75 thousand metric tons of food-grain and Tk

25 million have been sanctioned during the current fiscal year. Initiative has been taken for establishment of a university of science and technology and a medical college in Rangamati hill district for expansion of higher education.

**(E) Communication System/Physical
Infrastructure Development**

Mr. Speaker,

118. Prevalence of a smooth transport network is a pre-requisite to improve socio economic condition of a country. Programmes for the development, expansion and maintenance of countrywide communication infrastructure as well as strengthening of regulatory measures relating to road network are in progress. During this fiscal year, Sultana Kamal (2nd Shitalakkha) Bridge and Hazrat Shah Amanat (3rd Karnaphuly) Bridge have already been inaugurated. Important Foreign Aided Projects under implementation in this financial year are: construction of Dapdapia Bridge on Barisal-Patuakhali road, construction of Tista Bridge, Road Network Maintenance and Improvement Project-I&II, Chittagong Port Trade Facilitation Project and Eastern Bangladesh Bridge Improvement Project. Important on going GoB funded Projects are: 4-Laning of Dhaka-Chittagong Highway, Jaydevpur-Mymensingh road, Chittagong-Hathazari road, Nabinagar-DEPZ-Chandra road, Narayanganj Link road, flyover at Mirpur airport road and construction of overpass at Banani and Zurain rail crossing, construction of three bridges at Khepupara, Hajipur and Mohipur in Patuakhali- Kuakata road, Cox's Bazar-Teknaf marine drive road, Ten Bridges on Sylhet-Salutikar-

Bholaganj road, improvement of Gournadi-Agailjhara-Paisarhat-Kotalipara-Gopalgonj road (including Gopalgonj Bus Terminal Link road), improvement of Tungipara-Kotalipara road, improvement of Pirojpur-Gopalgonj (Ghonapara) road including completion of the remaining part of Sheikh Lutfur Rahman Bridge (Patgati bridge), Improvement of Comilla-Bibirbazar Land Port Road, construction of Ruma Bridge on Chimbuk-Ruma road, construction of Satkhira bypass road including Bhomra land port, remaining approach road of Shahid Buddijibi Shetu (3rd Buriganga Bridge) including the reconstruction of 3 old bridges etc. are in the process of implementation. The construction work of 3rd Shitalakha Bridge in Narayanganj will start in this financial year.

119. The agreed issues under Joint Communiqué, declared in January 2010 during the visit by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh to India like transportation of Indian over dimensional consignments from Ashuganj port to Akhaura check post through road, transportation of containerized cargo from India, Bhutan and Nepal using Chittagong and Mongla Ports, development of land port infrastructure, and projects under Indian state credit are now getting priority in road sector. In this context four projects have been identified for implementation. These are: construction of Jurain rail crossing overpass in Dhaka city, upgradation of Sharail-Brahmonbaria-Sultanpur-Chinair-Akhaura-Shenarbadi in to national Highway, improvement of Burimari-Lalmonirhat road and construction of Subrom-Ramgar-Heyako-Baraihat land port road. Apart from these initiatives, other prioritized issues under road sector are to strengthen and widen roads into 4 lanes so as to attain

international standard of the road section that falls within the Asian Highway route. In order to bring uniformity with the regional transport system, feasibility study of Benapol-Vatiapara-Jessore road, including Kalna Bridge, Bagura-Natore road, Joydevpur-Chandra-Tangail-Hatikamrul road, Faridpur-Barisal-Kuakata road and Dhaka-Mawa-Vanga road, construction of Lebukhali bridge in Barishal-Patuakhali highway, 3-bridges in Madaripur-Sariatpur road section and Kazirtek bridge on the river Arialkha have been undertaken. Relentless efforts are being made for extension of country's road network with Kunming, China through Myanmar, mega projects like bus rapid transit, mass rapid transit, construction of flyover, expressway, and overpass to reduce congestion in greater Dhaka and to implement integrated road safety measures.

120. The government appreciates the importance of railway and attaches top priority to railway over other modes of surface transport being imbued with the Vision-2021. To that end 25 railway projects have been approved for development and expansion till December 2010. Important among these projects are: Dohazari-Cox's Bazar-Gundum, Kalukhali-Bhatiapara-Gopalganj-Tungipara, Pachuria-Faridpur-Bhanga, Ishwardi-Pabna-Dhalarchar and Khulna-Mongla railway routes. In order to improve and expand railway communication, the present government has taken up a plan to convert Rangpur-Kaunia rail section into dual gauge by giving due importance to Rangpur division. The people of Rangpur can get the option of travelling on both meter and broad gauge lines if this project is implemented. A pair of commuter train named "Turag Express" has been introduced between Narayanganj and Joydevpur. A new

intercity train named "Dhumketu Express" has been introduced between Rajshahi and Dhaka and "Chattala Express" between Dhaka and Chattagong. Initiatives have been taken for doubling Dhaka-Chittagong railway corridor and to establish rail-communication over the Padma Bridge from Day-1 to meet passengers' expectation. Necessary steps have been taken to establish Trans-Asian, Regional and Sub-regional railway network. Information about train ticket through mobile phones and on-line ticketing system has been introduced as a part of efforts to build Digital Bangladesh. Against Indian state credit line, 12 important projects have been undertaken to purchase 40 broad gauge locomotives, 125 broad gauge and 414 meter gauge passenger coaches, 2 broad gauge inspection cars, 180 broad gauge & 100 meter gauge tank wagons, 220 meter gauge flat wagons and 10 sets of DEMU (Diesel Electric Multiple Unit) as well as construction of Khulna-Mongla railway line, 2nd Bhairab and Titas Bridge.

121. Initiatives have been taken to strengthen institutional and technical capacity of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA). To reduce harassment of clients and to make collection of taxes and fees easier and transparent, the government has introduced countrywide on-line banking system. To reduce road accidents and to make the roads safer, National Road Safety Council (NRSC) has been reorganized and made operational. BRTA has taken initiative to establish training institutes for professional drivers at all divisional headquarters. Initiatives have been taken to formulate appropriate Motor Vehicles and Traffic Act, Rules and Regulations replacing existing Motor

Vehicle Ordinance, 1983 through Dhaka Transport Coordination Board (DTCB).

122. Several steps have been taken to reduce traffic congestion in Dhaka city. BRTC has procured 100 single Decker CNG buses from China through international open tendering method under Nordic Development Fund Loan. Additional 175 new CNG buses are expected to be in the fleet of BRTC shortly. In order to provide comfortable and affordable transport services in the form of city service, commuter service, and distant services to the dwellers of Dhaka city and its vicinity, initiative has been taken to procure 300 CNG buses under EDCF (Korean) loan, for which a project has been approved by ECNEC and pre-procurement formalities are progressing fast. Formalities are underway to procure 300 Double-deckers, 100 AC Single Deckers and 50 articulated buses under Indian state credit. BRTC has rehabilitated/rebuilt 4 Volvo buses including 80 heavy buses out of 125 buses under rehabilitation within 16 months in their workshop at Joydevpur and supplied those to different depots. Rehabilitation of rest of the buses is progressing in full swing. It is expected that BRTC will be able to build a modern public transport system with its enhanced fleets in the near future. As a part of building "Digital Bangladesh", BRTC has already introduced Electronic Ticketing system in its city service and Volvo double Decker buses in Dhaka. Pre-paid card options in this system will be introduced soon. There is a plan to expand this system in other big cities of the country.

123. Various steps have been taken to implement Strategic Transport Plan (STP) in order to resolve traffic

jams and to improve the transport system of Dhaka metropolis. The Government has taken steps to construct 26 km long Dhaka Elevated Expressway project. The project has been enlisted as a private infrastructure project following private investment guidelines. The construction work of the project will start in April 2011 and is expected to be completed by 2013. Initiatives have been taken to construct 1.50 km long tunnel from Jahangir gate to Rokeya Sharani in Dhaka city and 2.00 km long tunnel under river Karnaphuli to link up two parts of Chittagong city. Feasibility study will be conducted this financial year as a step towards constructing those tunnels. Feasibility study for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Bus rationalization under Clean Air and Sustainable Environment (CASE) project with an estimated cost of Tk 430 million is progressing. Coordination with relevant agencies/stakeholders are being maintained in matters relating to the construction of flyover, rail overpass, road underpass and east-west connection with a broader view to develop an integrated transportation system in and around Dhaka. Honourable Prime Minister has laid the foundation stone on 22 June 2010 to construct 10 km long "Mayor Mohammed Hanif Flyover" starting from Jatrabari to Palashi with a view to address traffic jam and road safety under public private partnership (PPP). The project is set to be completed by December 2012. Apart from that, the government is implementing a project to construct the missing loop of the Khilgaon Flyover. The project will help connect Progoti Sharani with Rajarbag and Motijheel area on the eastern side of Dhaka, for reducing traffic jam on a large scale. Steps have been taken to construct 8.25 km flyover in FDC, Mogbazar, Mouchak, Shantinagar and Malibag area. In order to ensure safe road, a

project has been taken to build four underpasses at Sonargaon, Bangla-motor, Sheraton and Shahbag. Programme has been taken to build five more underpasses on the same corridor with a view to ensure free flow of vehicles on airport road. Moreover, projects have been taken to build link roads, on both sides of railway line starting from Sonargaon rail crossing to Mohakhali rail crossing, construction of flyover from Golapsha Mazar premises to Banglabazar, construction of link road under Hatirjheel Development project, construction of Kuril flyover and construction of 100 feet wide Madani avenue road starting from Progoti Sarani to Balu River. Projects have been undertaken by RAJUK (Rajdhani Unnayan Kartiphakha) and CDA (Chittagong Development Authority) to construct 110 km road including main road and three flyovers at Chittagong in 2010-11.

124. Immediately after inception, the present government has given highest priority to construct Padma bridge near Maowa-Jajira point with a view to ensure smooth and coordinated road network in all regions of the country. As a part of this venture, a design consultant firm was appointed within 13 days of the inception of present government. Meanwhile, the appointed firm has finalised the design part of the bridge. The project cost stands at US \$ 2.97 billion (equivalent to Tk 205 billion) according to the final design of the bridge. Out of this estimated cost, the development partners will contribute a total of US \$ 2.35 billion (equivalent to Tk 164 billion) as loan assistance. The DPP has been approved in the ECNEC meeting held on 11 January 2011. It is expected that the construction work of Padma Bridge will start in July 2011 and will be completed

by December 2013 after completion of other formalities like appointment of contractor for river training and approach road and signing credit agreement with development partners. Nineteen south-western districts of the country will be connected with the eastern part including Dhaka if the bridge is completed. This will make a revolutionary change not only in domestic road network but also in the regional connectivity with south Asian countries, as the bridge falls on the Asian Highway route- AH-1. This bridge will play a vital role in reducing poverty and bringing about socio economic growth with a 1.2% increment of GDP.

125. Necessary steps have been taken to construct 6 km long 2nd Padma multi-purpose bridge at Paturia-Goalanda point with the objective of establishing communication linkage between southern and south-western part of the country and bringing about socio-economic changes in that area. On the other hand, initiative has been taken to build 1.50 km Bekutia Bridge over the river Kocha in Pirojpur-Jhalokati road with a view to establish direct road communication between Barisal and Khulna divisions and to revitalise economic activities and expansion of trade and commerce. The Planning Commission has on principle approved the PDPP of the project at a cost of Tk 4.6 billion (465 crore) on 1 July 2009. As an initial step, feasibility study will be conducted within this financial year. The physical construction of the bridge is expected to be taken place as soon as financial arrangement is made. Moreover, initiatives have been taken to conduct feasibility studies to construct new bridges at different locations to ensure uninterrupted road communication in the country.

126. A mega project on capital dredging has been undertaken by the present government at a cost of Tk 114.70 billion to maintain and improve inland navigability for 9 years and ensure safe river communication. Under this project, a total of 327.6 million cubic metre of dredging has been proposed in 53 main waterways. For implementing the project, BIWTA has already issued work order for purchase of 3 dredgers after a long interval of 36 years when 17 dredgers were purchased during the tenure of Bangabandhu. It is expected that these dredgers will be available by March 2011. In addition to that, a programme has been initiated for purchase of 17 dredgers at an estimated cost of Tk 15 billion (Tk 1500 crore). At the same time, the private sector has been encouraged to get involved in dredging. As a result, 11 dredgers have been procured in the private sector and they are already engaged in dredging works. During the tenure of the present government (January 2009 to September 2010), around 6.1 million cubic metre of dredging has been done under maintenance of navigability programme. Around 691 thousand cubic metre of dredging has so far been done under long term dredging programme and Dhaka Port Modernization Project of the Annual Development Programme.

127. In order to introduce the circular waterway around Dhaka, a total of 1.9 million cubic metre dredging and 1.34 million cubic metre excavation have been conducted. The landing facilities at Kanchpur area have already been installed and the development of Tongi River Port is in progress. Project has been undertaken to develop berthing and landing facilities of Barisal River Port, the second largest river port of the country at the estimated cost of Tk

176 million is at the final stage of implementation. The beautification of Dhaka and some other River ports is also in the final stage. By improving proper coordination of overall management of vessels, the present government has arranged smooth transportation of home-bound people to their destinations on waterways and river ports during the last two Eid festivals. This initiative was highly appreciated by the people. Cancellation of lease system at Dhaka's Sadarghat and creation of a labour-friendly environment have freed passengers from harassments. The rescue ship Hamza and Rustom, each with capacity of 60 tons, which were procured in 1964 and 1983 respectively are insufficient compared to the size and weight of the ships that are in use. To overcome this difficulty, tender process initiated for procurement of 2 rescue ships, each with a capacity of 250 tons, is in the final stage. A RCC jetty is under construction at Sandwip of Chittagong, which will ease long term sufferings of the people of Sandwip.

128. The Task Force constituted for keeping the Buriganga, Shitalakkha, Turag, Balu and other major rivers of the country free from illegal occupation and pollution is going to set up pillars after completing demarcation of the foreshore. In order to keep the rivers free from illegal occupation, 1494 establishments have been evicted by BIWTA on different occasions. Apart from this, the task force has recovered 4 canals out of 26 illegally occupied canals within Dhaka City; the remaining canals are also under the process of recovery. To make the rivers free from pollution, garbage from the riverbed of Buriganga up to 1.50 km. has already been removed and removal from 3.50 more km. is underway under the "Climate Change Trust Fund".

129. With a view to smoothly handle the increasing traffic on ferries, 2 K-type ferry, 2 Ro-Ro ferry and 3 pontoons have been rehabilitated under a development project of ADP and deployed at Paturia and Mawa Ghat. After rehabilitation of the pontoon, loading/unloading facilities of vehicles have increased. Rehabilitation of another 2 Ro-Ro ferry and 3 pontoons is going on. To reduce traffic jam in Dhaka city, two water buses at the cost of Tk 11.2 million have been built and deployed in the circular waterways for carrying passengers from Sadar-ghat to Amin Bazar. Construction of another four water buses is under process. Being inspired by the government, the private entrepreneurs are going to import suitable water-buses for plying on different routes within next six months.

130. To enable Bangladeshi seafarers travel around the world, the government has successfully introduced “Seafarer Biometric Machine Readable” ID card from January 2010. This will enhance overseas employment opportunities of Bangladeshi seafarers. The present government has undertaken various projects to develop the Marine Academy, which will be completed by 2013. Under this project, this Academy will be upgraded into a Maritime University and six more feeder academies will be established in Barisal, Khulna, Pabna, Rangpur, Narayanganj and Sylhet. To establish a Deep Sea Port in Bangladesh, a techno-economic feasibility study has been conducted. Based on the study, Sonadia Island has been selected for establishment of deep sea port. Advertisement has been published in newspapers and the website of Ministry of Shipping to appoint consultant for preparing detailed design of the deep sea port. The draft of “Deep Sea

Port Authority Act” is being prepared in order to constitute Deep Sea Port Authority. In addition, initiatives have been taken for the construction of third Sea Port at Ramanabad Channel of Kalapara upazila under Patuakhali district.

131. To ensure international standard container handling and environmental management, a project named “Chittagong Port Trade Facilitation” is being implemented with an estimated cost of Tk 1.3 billion. In the backdrop of globalisation and to face the challenges of 21st century, various reform initiatives have been undertaken and completed to develop the operational skill of Chittagong Port and make it user-friendly. Some of the reform initiatives are – introduction of CTMS for Computerized Terminal Operation, inauguration of ‘Two Stage Gate’ to upgrade security measures, installation of Radioactive Detection Instruments for identification of Nuclear and Radioactive material in all exportable containers and Capital Dredging project for enhancing navigability of river Karnaphuli at a cost of Tk 3.76 billion. Furthermore, Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) has undertaken Vessel Traffic Surveillance System (VTMIS) for marine safety, which is expected to be completed in the year 2011. For increasing port facilities, construction of backward linkage of New Mooring Container Terminal is going on. In addition, initiative has been taken to appoint a Terminal Operator of international standard under the Public Private Partnership (PPP). Different types of Cargo Handling Equipments have been procured for enhancing the quality of services to port-users. Construction of a Container Terminal at Pangaon, near Dhaka is in progress to handle river borne containers coming from Chittagong and Mongla Port . It is

expected that, this terminal will be able to handle 1,16,000 TEUs Container per annum. As a result of implementation of these projects, service delivery of the Chittagong Port will attain International Standard and the port capacity will enhance manifold compared to the past.

132. Mongla Port is well-placed due to its strategic and geographical location and its ability to extend assistance in foreign trade to neighbouring countries like India, Nepal and Bhutan. The present Government of Bangladesh emphasises on taking positive steps in this regard. For the development of Mongla Port, the government is implementing 5 development projects at an estimated cost of TK 3.57 billion. Implementation of these projects will enhance the efficiency and capability of the port significantly. Apart from this, programmes have been undertaken for the development of Benapole and Bhomra Land Ports for increasing trade facilities through land route. To make movement of passengers convenient through Benapole port to India, initiative has been taken to construct Inter-Country Bus Terminal, Inter-District Bus Terminal and Land Port Terminal for parking of transports carrying goods. Port activities have been started by building necessary infrastructure at Akhaura, Banglabandha, Burimari, Sonamasjid, Bibirbazar and Teknaf. Necessary steps have been taken to establish new land ports in Nakugaon, Haluaghat, Teghamukh and Ramgar. With a view to make Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC) a profitable organization, steps have been taken to purchase a mother tanker of 125 thousand metric ton capacity and 2 vessels (ship) each of 30 thousand to 35 thousand metric ton capacity. To procure the vessels, Bangladesh Shipping

Corporation has initiated the process of offloading its shares in the Stock Market.

Mr. Speaker,

133. The government has decided to construct “Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib International Airport” under Public-Private Partnership (PPP) at an estimated cost of Tk 750 billion for development of the existing aviation system of the country. Besides, programmes are going on to renovate Hazarat Shahjalal International Airport, upgrade Cox’s Bazar Airport into an International Airport, development of Barisal Airport to tackle disasters and to conduct emergency relief works in the southern region of the country and construction of Khan Jahan Ali Airport in Bagerhat at a cost of Tk 13.66 billion.

134. Biman Bangladesh Airlines, the National Flag carrier of the country had become a losing organization due to shortage of aircrafts, high maintenance and management cost, unusual price hike of fuel, incapability in commercial decision-making and wastage of financial resources. In spite of all the above-mentioned difficulties, Biman has carried a total of 1.42 million passengers and 2.62 million kg goods during the financial year 2009-10. With an aim to enhance financial capability, Biman Bangladesh Airlines has cut its costs in different sectors. By introducing different measures in accordance with the anti-corruption stance of the government, corruption in this sector has been reduced to a minimum level. The measures include simplification of different service delivery system, intensive monitoring and rigid administrative control. With this aim in view,

installation of modern computer network with modern technology is under process. The process of direct service delivery to the clients has been almost finalised by introducing "Internet Booking Engine" (IBE). It is expected that, online ticket system will be introduced through which passengers will be able to pay air fares by using credit cards.

Mr. Speaker,

135. The present democratic government has taken massive programmes for smooth management of water resources. The government has started programmes to prevent flooding in an area of 40,000 hectares, expand irrigation facilities in 15,000 hectares and create a 25 km. channel to help irrigation, re-excavate 670 km and build 20 irrigation structures and 70 repair works during the FY 2010-2011. Apart from this, development of three rubber dams to help irrigation in the Chittagong area is proceeding fast. In Mirsharai upazila of Chittagong district, the "Mahamaya Chhara Irrigation Expansion Project" has been inaugurated recently by the Honourable Prime Minister at a cost of Tk 171.6 million. With the completion of the project, an additional 7,665 metric tones of crops and 1,000 metric tons of fish would be produced per year. To increase navigability of the major rivers of the country and to prevent river erosion, the present government has emphasized on the importance of capital dredging on a large scale for the first time. Under the project "Capital(Pilot) Dredging" of river systems in Bangladesh, 22 km of dredging plan has been accepted at Sirajganj Hard Point and at Nalini Bazar area of the Jamuna river in the first phase .

136. To reduce salinity and contain silting of rivers in the southern region of Bangladesh, the recovery of the Gorai River Project (2nd phase) has been started on an emergency basis with a cost of TK 9.42 billion. Under this project, dredging is continuing by appointing contractors through International Tender. Implementation of projects at a cost of Tk 9.45 billion is going on with the aim of increasing the flow of rivers around Dhaka, namely Buriganga, Turag, Pungli and Dhaleshwari and to diminish river pollution. For capital dredging and maintenance dredging, the Ministry of Water Resources has prepared work-plan for procuring 15 dredgers. Meanwhile, tender has been invited for procurement of 5 dredgers; procurement of 2 dredgers under loan agreement with India is in progress. Work order has been issued for procuring 2 dredgers under Gorai River Recovery Project

137. Surveys are being conducted to implement the "Ganga Barrage Project". The present government has attached great importance to the improvement of haor-baor areas of the country. A master plan to develop a massive haor area is under process. Already, a "Money For Work" (kabita) programme with nearly Tk 180 million outlay has been initiated by involving the people's representatives and the mass people. A massive development project in the Sylhet Haor area is in its final stage. Rehabilitation of the polders damaged by cyclone Aila in coastal areas has been completed at a cost of nearly Tk 860 million. The repair work of the other affected infrastructures is almost complete. Under the "Char Development & Settlement Programme" (CDSP) project, salinity could be removed from 1.2 million

hectares of land and 15,903 acres of land have been recovered and leased out to 11,298 landless families.

138. Attempts have been made to improve the living condition of the people through efficient distribution and management of water resources of the 57 cross-border rivers through regional and international cooperation. In accordance with section-9 of the water-sharing agreement signed with India on the Ganges river, special emphasis has been placed on signing permanent/long term water-sharing agreement with India on the river Teesta and effort is on to sign similar agreement with India on the river Dharla, Dudhkumar, Monu, Muhuri, Khowai and Gomoti. Diplomatic efforts are being made to strengthen regional and sub-regional cooperation on water management of the common international rivers flowing through China, India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh, all of which are located on the same basin.

Mr. Speaker,

139. Like food, clothing and education, housing is one of the basic needs of human beings. A draft has been prepared to amend National Housing Policy 1999 in order to provide shelter for the people throughout the country by making planned use and ensuring protection of agricultural land. The draft policy will be finalized shortly after obtaining opinion from different segments of people and stakeholders. To construct environment-friendly safe and risk-free buildings, revision of Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC) is going on. To reduce the continuing pressure of population in the capital city Dhaka, the government has taken initiative to

set up 4 Satellite Cities around Dhaka City. RAJUK has undertaken projects for construction of 52 thousand flats for low and middle-income groups. These include 20160 flats in Uttara (3rd phase), 20 thousand in Purbachal New Town Project and 10 thousand in Jhilmil Project. National Housing Authority has undertaken projects to construct 98 thousand flats, of which 12 thousand flats will be constructed in Mohammadpur and Mirpur areas of Dhaka City. A project has been undertaken by the government for construction of 3 thousand flats for government officials. Detailed Area Plan (DAP) has been prepared for Master Plan Area of Rajuk comprising 1528 sq. km for planned development and expansion of Dhaka city and also to reduce continuing population pressure on the capital. With a view to build planned housing, National Housing Authority is implementing different projects in various districts and upazila towns. Processes are on to construct flats in Dhaka city and sell those to the family members of martyred and war-wounded freedom fighters.

140. Real Estate is an important sector in our economy. Employment opportunity for a lot of people has been created through huge investments in the sector. Recently, the Jatiya Sangsad has passed the Real Estate Act, 2010 considering the importance of real estate sector in the national economy. It is expected that the real estate sector will be boosted by implementing this act. It will be possible to reduce harassment of people by establishing discipline in this sector. This prospective sector and industries linked with it will make direct and indirect contributions in enhancing creation of employment and industrialisation in the country.

141. Preparation of a master plan for the mausoleum of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu at Tungipara in the district of Gopalganj is under process. A programme has been approved with a view to construct infrastructure including rest houses with related indispensable facilities for visiting students and local and foreign tourists. A plan is also being prepared to develop Cox's Bazar town and to build a sea beach city extending from Cox's Bazar to Teknaf.

142. During the 2010-11 fiscal year, the government has been implementing 8 Urban Infrastructure Development Programmes and 54 Rural Infrastructure Development Programmes. Development of roads, construction of bridges, culverts, growth centre/haat-bazaars and union council complexes under these programmes are making significant contribution to overall Infrastructural development of the country. In the light of poverty reduction strategy of the government, a long term infrastructure development and maintenance mega-plan has been prepared, which is to be implemented by 2025.

Mr. Speaker,

143. The present Government has taken various steps for ensuring technology based post & telecommunication services at affordable price. The number of telephone subscribers has increased to 65 million due to remarkable reduction in telephone and internet call charges. The tele-density and the internet density have increased from 35.62 percent and 4 percent to 43.09 percent and 5 percent respectively in the past one year. A total of 838 licences have been awarded to government as well as private

organizations for overall development of the telecommunication sector. These include fixed phones, mobile, ICX, HIG, wimax, NTTN, call-centres etc. All upazilas of the country have been brought under mobile internet network. In addition to that, initiatives have been taken to bring 1000 union parishads under optical fibre network in the preliminary stage.

144. Various projects and programmes have been initiated with a view to build a confident and poverty-free country through development and expansion of information and communication technology. These are: establishment of more than 1600 computer laboratories in schools and colleges of the country; 152 Community e-Centres (CeC) at Upazilla level and web portals in 64 districts; network in government offices; 20 cyber centres in universities and university colleges; Hi-tech park at Kaliakoir upazilla under Gazipur district; software technology park/IT village; Information and Service Centres in 859 unions through installation of solar panel, where there is no electricity; supply of Laptops with internet connection to the Divisional Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners and Upazila Nirbahi Officers, etc. Implementation of "Development of National ICT Infra-network for Bangladesh Government (Bangla Gov-net)" project for establishing networks between different tiers of government offices has been started. At total of 7848 people have been imparted computer training. ICT Incubator has been installed at BSRS building, Karwan Bazar, Dhaka. Website hosting centrally through Bangladesh Computer Council server and establishment of the office of Controller of Certifying Authority for introducing Digital Signature are some other notable

initiatives. Computer laboratories will be established in more than 1200 schools and colleges during the current fiscal year. Connectivity with India, Bhutan and Nepal through "Establishment of South Asia Sub Regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Information Highway Project" has been launched. Bangladesh has obtained membership of Unicode Consortium. Moreover, the country has been identified among top 30 countries in Asia/Pacific Region for offshore services during 2010-2011. Bangladesh has been ranked 106th (127th in 2008) among 134 countries in respect of global and legal maturity.

145. "Digital Bangladesh" aims to provide maximum services to the doorsteps of citizens within shortest possible time. In order to provide services at the grass-root level, it is necessary to ensure availability of all services at the union level and establish connectivity between the unions and the offices at upazila and district levels. With this aim, district web portals have been launched; people have been acquainted with more than two hundred services through holding of public innovation fairs. Steps have been taken to establish e-centres (one stop service) at the district level. Necessary initiatives will be taken to ensure internet connections at the grass-root level through Public-Private Partnership very soon.

146. It has now become possible to get information about all districts from different corners of the globe due to the launching of district web-portals. With the contribution of local and international consultants and government policy-makers, formulation of the Digital Bangladesh Strategy Paper is now at a final stage. Honourable Prime Minister

Sheikh Hasina and former Prime Minister of New Zealand and UNDP Administrator Ms. Helen Clark jointly inaugurated Union Information and Service Centres (UISC) in all unions in November 2010. This is an exemplary step for delivering various services to the citizens at the grassroots level through ICT. By running programmes at these centers, income-generation opportunities have been generated for 9,002 entrepreneurs through training, out of which 4501 are women.

147. 'Rural Connectivity Guideline 2010' has been formulated through Domestic Network Coordination Committee in order to ensure availability of fast internet connections at upazilla and district levels including villages. PPP policy has been restructured, through which unused dark fibre from Power Grid Company of Bangladesh (PGCB) was transferred to Bangladesh Telecommunication Company Limited (BTCL) to provide low cost internet connectivity at the grass-roots level.

148. A programme is underway to reduce the cost of internet bandwidth from Tk 18,000/MB to Tk 12,000/MB. Bringing down the cost of this bandwidth to up to Tk 10,000/MB from 1 July 2011 is also under process. The number of internet users rose from 0.6 million to 6.6 million due to the reduction of bandwidth cost from Tk 27000 to Tk 18000. The use of bandwidth has increased from 9.5 Gbps to 15.5 Gbps up to December 2010.

149. A Cyber Security Policy has been drafted to prevent cyber attack on various important websites. More than 400

quickly executable e-services have been identified in ministries/divisions and directorates, among which many have already been implemented. By using mobile phone, 6.7 million utility bills have been paid; 45,000 railway tickets were sold, 6,30,000 students have been registered for admission tests in 22 universities and 1,50,000 sugarcane growers have received purchase orders through e-purji from all sugar mills across the country.

150. Use of digital content is globally recognised for improving quality of education and making classroom experience more pleasant. In this context, 400 teachers and trainers have been imparted training on the use of multimedia classrooms and digital contents. Steps have been taken to compose e-text books. With a view to providing e-services to all the people, digital leadership has been built through providing training to approximately 2000 government officials and local government representatives at all levels, including Divisional Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners, UNOs and Upazila Chairmen.

151. Different projects have already been introduced including Mobile Money Order Service, Cash Card, and Postal Automation. The Guaranteed Express Post (GEP) service has been introduced in almost all upazilas of the country. A remarkable success has been achieved in establishing e-Governance by introducing SMS and Internet for announcing SSC and HSC results, university admission applications, job applications, announcement of advance alert messages of disasters through Call Broadcast, and SMS Banking etc. The present government has taken initiatives to introduce Third Generation Technology (3G).

152. The Telephone Silpa Sngstha (TSS) has been able to emerge as a profitable concern by initiating manufacture and marketing of PSTN (land) telephone sets, mobile sets, mobile battery charger, electric digital meter (for power sector). Besides several projects have been taken to manufacture and assemble laptop computer, solar panel and maintenance-free battery. Bangladesh Cable Industries Corporation has installed and commissioned an optical fibre plant, having capacity of producing 9000 kilometre per year, which will meet 75% of total demand in the country. As a result, greater employment opportunity will be created along with achieving self sufficiency in the production of telecommunication accessories.

153. Bangladesh became a member of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in 1973 under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Father of the Nation. Bangladesh has been elected as a Council Member of ITU for the year 2010-2014. Close involvement with the ITU is expected to be helpful in the successful implementation of "Vision 2021" of the present government.

Mr. Speaker,

154. Tourism can be an effective tool for building a 'Golden Bangla' as dreamt by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to implement "Vision 2021" and create "Digital Bangladesh" as well as to make Bangladesh a middle income country. Tourism is a multi-dimensional industry and it works as a vehicle for creating harmony, heartiest bondage and fraternity among

nations. Since ancient times, people embarked on travels from one country to another due to their innate nature. Bangladesh, the land of ever-green and fertile landscape - possesses the world's longest sea-beach Cox's Bazar, the globe's single largest mangrove forest - Sundarban, natural beauty of hilly areas, Asia's largest man-made lake -Kaptai, colourful lifestyle and culture of ethnic people, natural beauty of Sylhet's lush green forest, tea-gardens and hilly areas, haor-baor of Mymensingh & Sunamganj, Khasia-Jaintia and Garo hills of Mymensingh & Sylhet, archaeological sites of Naogaon, Bogra and Comilla, and different types of Buddhist religious sites, all of which are major tourist attractions. The religious sites of the Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Christians, the innumerable meandering rivers and canals, the diversity of various rare wild animals including the world famous Royal Bengal Tiger have special attractions for the tourists. Bangladesh can earn its place in the competitive world market through proper development and promotion of this promising tourism industry.

155. The government has enacted "Bangladesh Tourism Protected Area & Exclusive Tourist Zone Act -2010" and "Tourism Policies -2010" and has formed "National Tourism Board" in order to develop the tourism industry. A time-bound plan (2009-14) prepared for development of 756 identified tourist spots is being implemented. A master plan with regard to Cox's Bazar and Kuakata is being formulated. New tourism training centres are being established. Different measures have been taken to create positive attitude towards Bangladesh and to introduce the main spots of tourist attraction to the outside world during the ICC

World Cup Cricket-2011. Meanwhile, a master plan has been chalked out for massive advertisement and marketing of tourism by declaring the year 2011 as the Year of Tourism. A target has been set to double the number of tourists to 1 million by the year 2011. In order to make tourism the largest foreign currency earner and employment generator, different measures have been taken to popularise tourism, which include opening a tourism cell in all districts headed by the Deputy Commissioner, gradually introducing tourist facilities in the less-visited tourist spots of the country, establishing hotels and other facilities under PPP, country branding, voting campaign for selecting the Sundarbans as one of the seven wonders of the world.

(F) Human Resource Development

Mr. Speaker

156. Education is the key to development and is one of the main tools for eradicating poverty. After assuming office, the present government has formulated the 'National Education Policy, 2010' with the help of distinguished educationists. Ministry of Education has already taken up programmes to implement the Education Policy, which was discussed and unanimously accepted by the Ninth Parliament. It is expected that if the policy is implemented in full, the existing discriminations in education sector will be eliminated and the future generation will be raised up as skilled, knowledgeable and enlightened citizens of the country.

157. The government of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu had nationalised primary schools and the services of primary school teachers soon after independence by attaching utmost importance to primary education. The government is pledge-bound to ensure admission of all children to schools by 2011 and eradicate illiteracy by 2014. The government has been implementing massive programmes to achieve this target. In order to make the educational administration dynamic, the government has appointed 1,852 head-teachers, 51,289 assistant teachers and 489 assistant upazila education officers. Besides, less qualified 15,932 teachers of registered non-government primary schools have been given 100 percent of their basic salary similar to the teachers of government primary schools. It was decided that the remaining 5,590 teachers would get similar benefits on their completion of C-in-Ed training. The teachers of registered non-government primary schools and community primary schools are being given 100 percent of basic salary like the teachers of government primary schools. With a view to adopting a pragmatic career plan for the officers and staff engaged in primary education management, an integrated recruitment rule has been formulated by incorporating scopes for promotion at all levels.

158. The terms and conditions for setting up and administering non-government primary schools have been relaxed. The government has introduced primary school final examination and on the basis of its results, stipends for class five are awarded. The number of primary level stipends has been increased by 10 percent. The number of students receiving stipends has also been increased from 4.8

million to 7.8 million. A number of 102 newly registered primary schools and 20 community schools have been brought under MPO during the period from January 2009 to December 2010. A total of 1192 teachers of non-government registered schools and 302 teachers of community primary schools have been brought under MPO. With the assistance of World Food Programme, about 600 thousand students of Kurigram, Gaibandha and Kishorganj and another 600 thousand students of 'Sidr' affected districts Barguna, Barisal, Satkhira, Bagerhat and Pirojpur are provided with highly nutritious biscuits under the 'School Feeding Programme'. This programme is also in operation in the hill-districts of Khagrachhari and Bandarban.

159. The biography of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the true history of our great Liberation War has been included in the curriculum. Alongside education, a football tournament named 'Bangabandhu Gold Cup Primary School Football Tournament' has been arranged this year from the union level up to the national level in order to promote the students' physical and mental growth. Pre-primary sections in 22,833 government primary schools have been introduced in 2010 and from 2011 the same will be introduced in all primary schools of the country. With a view to improving the quality of primary education, an amount of Tk 92 million has been allocated in innovative grant programme for capacity development of teachers and staff of primary schools. As a part of building a 'Digital Bangladesh', 1,109 offices responsible for managing primary education at the field levels have been provided with computers along with internet connection.

160. Under the Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-2) and other projects, an additional number of 8,480 classrooms and 108 schools-cum-cyclone shelters are being constructed; 9,567 primary schools are being supplied with furniture; a number of 6,335 arsenic-free tube-wells are being installed and 10 upazilla resource centres are being constructed. Besides, a decision was taken to reconstruct 288 government primary schools and 291 registered non-government primary schools in flood-affected and river-eroded areas. In order to expand educational opportunities, a project to set up primary schools in 1,500 villages lacking schools in the country has been approved by ECNEC. Keeping the ongoing projects of non-formal education uninterrupted, three new projects, namely 'Basic Literacy and Continuing Education in 61 Districts', 'Basic Literacy and Continuing Education in three Hilly Districts' and 'Basic Literacy and Skill Development for Working Children' have been approved.

161. The present government has distributed 190 million books free of cost among students of primary, secondary, technical schools, ebteyay and dakhil madrasas in 2010 academic year to motivate the students to attend schools and make them more attentive to education. A total of 232.3 million textbooks have been distributed among students during 2011 academic year. The rate of enrolment has increased remarkably as a result of timely distribution of free textbooks. Besides, by discouraging memory-based education, arrangement has been made to hold examinations through creative questions in order to encourage free thinking and inclination for knowledge among the students. To bring parity in the quality of education, the government

has conducted class eight ending final examination (JSC & JDC) all over the country. Initiatives have been taken to enhance the quality of teaching and learning processes in public and private universities and to create an enabling environment for research by encouraging innovative subjects under 'Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project' (HEQUEP) at a cost of Tk 6.81 billion. The results of SSC and HSC examinations are now being published within two months instead of three months by using digital system. Classes in secondary schools have been started on 1 January in schools and on 1 July in colleges. The schedules for starting classes in universities have also been brought forward.

162. The government has appointed 1,085 assistant teachers in secondary schools and promoted 2,500 college teachers to different posts ranging from lecturer to professor. A number of 3,500 teachers have been provided advanced training in computer. During the previous six years, no schools were granted MPO. After assumption of responsibility by the present government, 1,624 non government junior secondary and secondary schools and colleges have been granted MPO, thereby creating employment opportunities for a large number of teachers and staff in non-government educational institutes and enhancing opportunities for education of students.

163. Admission process to some public universities and about 49 polytechnic institutes of different districts are being completed by using SMS (Short Message Service) technology of mobile phones. In line with the 'Vision-2021' of the present government, steps have been taken to set up a

digital university at Gazipur district. A total of 1,400 laptops have been distributed among 700 educational institutions and modern computer laboratories have been set up in 20 schools for promoting e-learning. To promote and expand higher education, the present government has set up the University of Professionals in Dhaka, Begum Rokeya University at Rangpur and the University of Science and Technology in Pabna. In addition, the government has taken an initiative to establish a public university in Rangamati, Bangabandhu Science and Technology University in Gopalganj, Barisal University in Barisal District and Rabindra University at Shilaidah of Kushtia District. In order to create mass awareness against eve teasing, a number of seminars, symposiums and rallies have been arranged throughout the country.

164. To ease the pressure of admission in Dhaka city, the present government has undertaken projects to construct 11 secondary schools and six colleges in the public sector. The government has introduced double shifts in 82 public schools and with this end in view, created posts for 80 Assistant Head Teachers and 1,920 Assistant Teachers totalling 2,000 posts. Construction of physical infrastructure of 3,000 non-government secondary schools, 1,500 colleges and 1,000 madrasas are going on under three projects named 'Infrastructure Development of Selected Non-government Secondary Schools', 'Infrastructure Development of Selected Colleges' and 'Construction of Academic Buildings of Selected Madrasas' respectively. Moreover, projects were taken up to renovate and develop the infrastructure of 350 educational institutions in relatively backward areas of the country. In order to modernise madrasa education, the

government has introduced vocational training courses in 100 madrasas and Honours course in 31 madrasas of the country. The government has provided stipends to more than 4 million students under four projects in order to increase enrolment of girl students in schools, reduce their dropout rate and provide educational opportunity to children of extremely poor families. In order to encourage girls in education, education for girls up to twelfth grade has been made free. These initiatives have helped achieve 53 percent enrolment of girl students, encouraged girl students, reduced gender discrimination and enhanced empowerment of women in the long run. As a result of personal initiative of Honourable Prime Minister, UNICEF had declared 21 February as 'the International Mother Language Day'. The Jatiya Sangsad approved the 'International Mother Language Institute Act, 2010' on 5 October 2010, which would pave the way for preserving, promoting and undertaking research on Bengali language as well as other languages of the world, including those which might otherwise become extinct.

165. The history, civilization, national characteristics and identity of a nation are reflected through its culture. A strong commitment has been expressed in Article 23 and 24 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for protection of culture and heritage of the country. The pledge of the present government relating to culture is, 'The government will patronise and provide necessary assistance for preservation of the secular and democratic tradition of Bengalee culture as well as further improvement of Bengali language and literature, music, theatre, cinema and all branches of creative works and fine arts.' To achieve this

objective, the government is implementing various programmes for development, protection and expansion of Bengali culture. To meet these goals, Tk 957.8 million has been allocated in 14 development projects under the Annual Development Programme of the current fiscal year.

166. The projects titled 'Renovation of the Memorable House of the Forefathers of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman' and 'Establishment of Bangabandhu Memorial Public Library' have been implemented at Tungipara. Construction of National Theatre Hall of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, renovation and development of Bangladesh National Museum, establishment of Rakhaine Cultural Institute at Ramu in Cox's Bazar district, construction of 16 Shilpakala Academy buildings under a project titled "Establishment or Renovation Work of 20 District Shilpakala Academies" and building of 26 district public libraries under a project titled "Construction of 45 District Public Libraries" have been completed.

167. A special allocation of Tk 1 billion has been made to expand cultural activities in the country and different programmes are being formulated in this regard. 'Pahela Baishakh' - the Bengali New Year's Day of 1417 was celebrated nationwide as an official ceremony for the first time. In addition, an effort has been made to establish "Sonar Bangla Cultural Belt" to link up Suhrawardy Udyan with other historical places and cultural organizations in a coordinated fashion. During the Hon'ble Prime Minister's visit to India in January 2010, it was declared in the joint communiqué that the 150th birth anniversary of the great

poet Rabindranath Tagore would be celebrated jointly by Bangladesh and India in 2011.

168. Construction of Bangla Academy Bhaban and Nazrul Institute Centre at Comilla, expansion of infrastructure and security of 'Bangladesh Lok-o-Karushilpa Foundation' at Sonargaon and construction of 'Palli Kobi Jasimuddin Sangrohoshala at Faridpur' are in progress. To preserve, develop and expand the cultural heritage of different ethnic minorities in Bangladesh, "Khudra Nri-gosthir Sangskritik Protisthan Act, 2010" has been enacted. With a view to establish libraries at grassroots level and promote reading habit, a programme has been launched to establish Sherpur as a model district. The programme will be expanded gradually to other districts of the country as well. It should be mentioned that the grants for insolvent cultural activists and cultural organizations have been increased by 100 percent during 2010.

169. The youth community constitutes one-third of the total population of the country. The development and advancement of the country largely depends on the proper utilization of the youths, the most creative and intelligent segment of our population. This is why, the government has been implementing various development programmes to transform the youth community into productive human resources and to involve them in the national development process.

170. In order to utilise the scopes for employment at home and abroad and extend employment opportunities inside the country, the unemployed youths are given skill

development trainings on various trades across the country through 111 institutional and mobile training centres in 476 upazillas. In the fiscal year 2009-10, a total of 81,279 persons were given institutional training while 145,988 persons were given non-institutional trainings. In the current fiscal year, youths numbering 28,510 and 7,149 have been given institutional and non institutional trainings respectively.

171. The government has a credit fund of Tk 2.84 billion for providing loans to trained youths for encouraging their involvement in income generating activities. After assumption of office by the present government, 76,161 youths (both male and female) have been provided loans to the tune of Tk 1.04 billion. As a result, not only the loan-recipients youths are benefited, many insolvent families are also becoming solvent through marketing of products produced in the farms of self-employed youths.

172. In accordance with its election pledges, the Government has started the National Service Programme for providing employment opportunities to the educated unemployed youths. This programme is being implemented in Kurigram, Barguna and Gopalganj on pilot basis. A total of 64,748 unemployed youths having Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and above level of education have been listed for provision of employment opportunities for two years on a temporary basis. Out of this, 17,207 youths in three districts have completed their training in the first batch and they have been attached for employment at various workplaces. A total of 17,632 persons are undergoing training in the second batch. Other enlisted persons will be

imparted training and attached to work gradually. An amount of Tk 135.5 million was allocated for this programme during 2009-10 fiscal year, while Tk 1.9 billion has been allocated for the purpose during the current fiscal year. Youths (both males and females) will get Tk 100 per head as training allowance per day and will get Tk 200 per day as job allowance during employment period. This programme is being run successfully in three districts. A huge enthusiasm has been noticed among the general public about this programme.

173. The year 2010 was a year of success for the country's sports. The sportsmen and women of Bangladesh achieved remarkable successes at national and international levels. Bangladesh successfully organised the 11th South Asian (SA) Games from 29 January to 9 February 2010. The inaugural and concluding events of the game were applauded worldwide. By organizing the game, Bangladesh has been able to send a message to the world community that the country is capable of arranging such a big sports event. As a result, there has been a positive impact on international relations of the country, access of Bangladeshi products in international markets, increase in foreign investment and the development of tourism industry. For the first time, the divisional towns were used as venues for different events of South Asian games. As a result, people of those regions of the country got direct exposure to international games. On the occasion of the SA games, four sports establishments of international standard have been constructed, while other sports venues have been upgraded to international standard. Modern digital equipments have also been incorporated in sports. The country's sportsmen

have started receiving benefits of it. In the 11th South Asian Games, a total of eight countries participated. Bangladesh got the 3rd position by winning 18 gold, 23 silver and 50 bronze medals.

174. The Bangladesh team won 2 gold, 2 silver and 3 bronze medals at the 8th Commonwealth Shooting Games held in India from 18 to 28 February 2010. Moreover, Bangladesh Team won 27 gold, 31 silver and 24 bronze medals in the 3rd Indo-Bangladesh Bangla Games held in Kolkata from 24 to 27 March 2010. At the annual conference of ICC held in Singapore on 1 July 2010, Bangladesh was given the responsibility of the sole organizer for T20 World Cup Cricket to be held in 2014. Bangladesh won a memorable victory by beating England by 5 runs in One Day International (ODI) Cricket held at Bristol of the United Kingdom on 10 July 2010. Moreover, Bangladesh became Champion at Brunei Open Golf Championship held on 28-31 July 2010 in Brunei. Furthermore, Bangladesh became runner-up in Taiwan Masters Golf Tournament held on 3 October 2010. The newly constructed wooden floor gymnasium, handball stadium and Mohammad Ali Boxing stadium have been formally inaugurated on 30 October 2010 under the sports development programme of the present government.

175. Bangladesh won the test and one day cricket series against West Indies in that country in July 2009. Besides, Bangladesh team won a one day cricket series against Zimbabwe in Zimbabwean venues in August 2009; it won another one day series against the same country on home ground in November 2009. Bangladesh whitewashed New

Zealand team in the Micromax Cup one day cricket by 4-0. In November 2010, Bangladesh under 19 cricket team won a one day match against England youth cricket team on the soil of England. In addition, Bangladesh won one day international cricket series against Zimbabwe held during 1-12 December 2010 in Dhaka and Chittagong. Bangladesh men's cricket team won gold for the first time while the women team won silver in the 16th Asian games held in Guangzhou of China. The captain of Bangladesh national team Sakib al Hasan has been recognised as the highest ranking all rounder while Tamim Iqbal got the recognition of man of the year in the Wisden Magazine, which is known as the Bible of Cricket. The women Kabadi team of Bangladesh won bronze medal in the 16th Asian Games. The women Kabadi team also won bronze in the 2nd Asian Beach Games held on 8-16 December 2010 in Oman. Besides, Bangladesh organised different international events of handball, table tennis, badminton, SAF women football and other games. Musa Ibrahim climbed the highest peak of the Himalaya, Mount Everest and had the honour of hoisting Bangladeshi flag for the first time at the top of the mountain. A bill has been tabled in the parliament for establishing Bangabandhu Sports Welfare Foundation for the welfare of sports personalities. A positive image of Bangladesh has been built in the international arena through the creation of opportunities for the participation of female players and achievement of their success in different games.

176. A new dimension is going to be added to the success of Bangladesh through co-hosting the "ICC Cricket World Cup, 2011". The image of Bangladesh has been projected positively in the outside world as Bangladesh has been

selected as one of the organizers of the international event called world cup cricket. A total of six main matches and two practice matches including the inaugural programme will be held in Bangladesh. In view of that, 5 stadiums including the Bangabandhu National Stadium are being upgraded to international standard with an expenditure of about Tk 3 billion. The matches will be held in the venues of Dhaka and Chittagong. The image of Bangladesh will be further brightened in the outside world through successful holding of this event.

Mr. Speaker,

177. One of the fundamental responsibilities of the state, as has been delineated in the Constitution of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh, is to ensure the provisions of basic needs of life including healthcare. Bangladesh is committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. The government has taken various development programmes in order to groom a healthy, strong and productive population through development of health, nutrition and population sectors. Among these, the 'Health, Nutrition and Population Sector Programme' (HNPSP)', which has been under implementation from 2003 to 2011, is a remarkable one. The ECNEC approved a revised programme implementation plan for this sector on 28 August 2008 with an estimated cost of Tk 373.84 billion. This sector-wide approach has been continued as one of the large-scale sector in the development plan based on the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) of the government, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the United Nations and the evaluations of the development

partners. The process of formulating a new policy for the period of 2011-16 is at a final stage. Such programme will ensure the people's right to obtain health services.

178. The Government has so far effected many positive developments in the health sector through launching measures like enhancing transparency and ensuring accountability, developing human resources, appointing personnel, increasing the number of beds at district and upazila level hospitals, setting up medical colleges and nursing institutes, reopening community clinics and augmenting reproductive healthcare and nutrition services. Bangladesh won the United Nations Award in 2010 for achieving the MDG-4 targets, especially in reducing child mortality rate. Besides, Bangladesh has been awarded at the Conference of Global Alliance for Vaccination & Immunization (GAVI) for successfully implementing immunization programmes. The Honourable Health and Family Welfare Minister and the Honourable Health Adviser have been awarded for their roles in controlling the tobacco intake in the country. Moreover, in the international arena, Bangladesh extended medical assistance to other countries during natural calamities. A medical team of 40 doctors along with medicines worth Tk 39.67 million was sent to flood affected areas of Pakistan while another team comprising 10 doctors with medicines worth Tk 2.21 million was sent to Haiti to provide medical services to the victims of earthquake.

179. Infrastructural development and construction of new facilities are going on through massive investments in the health sector. So far, 214 out of 421 upazila health

complexes in the rural areas of the country have been upgraded from 31 to 50 bedded ones. The upgrading of 87 upazila health complexes is underway, while the remaining 120 complexes will be upgraded under the next sector programme. In addition to increasing the number of beds in the existing hospitals, four new medical colleges have been set up. Besides, three Institutes of Health Technology (IHT) have been established while 5 more are under construction. Measures are being taken to extend opportunities for medical education and research with a view to expanding medical services by establishing new specialised hospitals and institutes. A total of 3,780 health and family welfare centres have been set up in order to provide healthcare services at union levels while there are plans to set up 346 union health and family welfare centres in the remaining unions. Steps have been taken to transform Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University into a 'Centre of Excellence'. A plan has been approved for setting up Sheikh Fazilatunnessa Mujib Eye Hospital in Gopalganj to ensure eye-care for the people. Besides, healthcare facilities are being provided at a nominal fee to the low income people and slum dwellers, and free of cost to hardcore poor at 63 city health centres and 10 city maternity centres under 'Urban Primary Healthcare Project'. Moreover, the government has supplied 223 ambulances to different health institutes of the country. A total of 15 projects have been proposed to be included in the revised Annual Development Programme of 2010-11 fiscal year. These projects include: 50-bedded Gopalganj Sheikh Lutfur Rahman Dental College, extension of Khulna Sheikh Abu Naser Specialised Hospital Project, Construction of Trauma Centre at Ghona Para in Gopalganj District, establishment of Sheikh

Fazilatunnesa Muib Medical College Hospital and Nursing Institute at Gopalganj, Kushtia Medical College and Hospital, development of e-health for Digital Bangladesh, National Institute of Laboratory Medicine and Research, National Institute of Digestive Diseases and Research, extension of Dhaka Children Hospital at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Central Ambulance Service Management, Satkhira Medical College and Hospital, setting up of Medical Centres at different wards of Dhaka City, Specialized Training for Health Service Providers and establishment of Kishorganj and Faridpur Medical Colleges and Hospitals. The establishment of the Institute of Neuroscience is at the final stage. This institute has a 300 bed hospital. Construction of two 500 bed hospitals at Kurmitola and Khilgaon of Dhaka City is also in the final stage.

180. Arrangements have been made to set up 13,500 community clinics in the rural areas based on the principle of establishing one community clinic for every 6,000 persons. Meanwhile, measures have been taken to put 10,723 community clinics into operation. Plans have been made to construct 2,876 new community clinics to ensure healthcare services for the rural people through community clinics. In order to deliver health services to the doorsteps of the people, appointment of 13,500 community healthcare providers is under process. This will result in the improvement of healthcare services at the rural level on the one hand and in generation of employment opportunities on the other. For development of the nursing sector, BSc in nursing course has been introduced and admission of students as well as educational activities have been launched in newly set up 11 nursing institutes during 2009-10

academic session. Three new nursing colleges have been set up while initiatives have been taken to convert 7 more nursing institutes into colleges. A total of 1,748 nurses were appointed during last year and 703 more nurses are under the process of being recruited under the quota for freedom fighters. Besides, 5,872 Doctors and 6,391 Health Assistants have been appointed, while the recruitment process of 655 Family Welfare Visitors (FWVs), 470 Medical Technologists and 550 Medical Assistants is in the final stage.

181. In order to ensure safe childbirth for poor women, maternal voucher scheme has been introduced in 46 upazilas. These vouchers allow poor women to access required healthcare services during pregnancy and childbirth stage in any government hospital or clinic. At present, Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) coverage stands at 79 percent, where all doses of vaccines are given to children under one year and 93 percent of all doses of vaccines are given to children under two years. As a result of successful implementation of EPI programme, child mortality rate has been reduced from 88 to 60. According to 'Vision 2021', the government is continuing its initiatives and efforts to increase the rate of users of family planning methods to 80 percent and average life expectancy to 70 years, reduce maternal mortality rate to 1.43 and mortality rate of children under one year to 15.

182. To transform the 'Vision 2021' into a reality, computer networks have already been set up along with internet connection in all the government hospitals, establishments and offices in the district and upazila levels.

Besides, at present all the district hospitals and upazila health complexes have mobile phones through which doctors are providing healthcare services to the patients. The government has also established eight Telemedicine centres in different parts of the country. Through these centres, the people at the grassroots level will be able to obtain medical advice from different specialist doctors at Dhaka free of cost. The tracking of procurement of the Family Planning Department and the management of stores and stocks at all levels are being done through LMIS software. Measures have been taken to apply the same system in the procurement, store and stock management of the Department of Health. Initiatives have been taken to incorporate e-procurement in this software.

Mr. Speaker,

183. The government has adopted Vision-2021 in order to expand the use and application of information and communication technology in all sectors and spheres of society, ensure improved and quick service delivery through IT based programmes and introduce IT based education, industry and economy. Besides, programmes have been undertaken to achieve the objective of turning Bangladesh into a middle income country within 2021 by establishing a Digital Bangladesh through reduction of poverty by generating ICT based employment and engaging promising young people having IT knowledge in industries and offices. The government has expressed its firm commitment to establish a Digital Bangladesh by reaching ICT to the doorsteps of the mass people. In line with the objectives and plans of the government, laws and policies such as ICT

(Revision) Act, 2009; National ICT Policy-2009; Bangladesh National Scientific and Technical Documentation Centre (BANSDOC) Act, 2010; Bangladesh Hi-tech Park Authority Act, 2010; Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Novo-theatre Act, 2010; Bangladesh National Science and Technology Museum Act, 2010 and National Institute of Biotechnology Act, 2010 have been enacted.

184. The Bangabandhu Fellowship has been reintroduced with a view to grooming specialist scientists, technologists, researchers and academicians in different sectors of ICT. Scholarships are being provided under this fellowship for obtaining Masters, PhD and Post Doctoral degrees at home and abroad for conducting research works. In 2009-10 fiscal year, 185 scientists were given research grants as incentives for scientific research activities, while 162 scientists have been selected for the 2010-11 fiscal year. To encourage science education and research, a total of 409 students have been given scholarships to undergo Masters, PhD, and Post-Doctoral Courses in the year 2009-10, while selection of another 299 students has been finalised for the year 2010-11.

185. Establishment of a separate Ministry of Information and Communication Technology is now underway. Institute for Nuclear Science and Technology has been established at Savar, Dhaka for research and training on nuclear energy. Besides, research on solar energy has also been taken up. Treatment and services have been provided to 260,000 patients in 13 Nuclear Medicine Centres (NMC) at Medical Colleges and the Institute of Nuclear Medicine at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University during the

last two years. Diagnoses of diseases of different human organs including brain, liver, kidney, thyroid and bones, detection of foetus positions and identification of causes of malnutrition, anaemia, functions of kidney, heart etc. are being done by using radioactive isotopes at these centres. Moreover, 3,571 amniotic membrane and 6,491 bone grafts have been processed and distributed to different hospitals and surgeons for the treatment of burns, deformities and defects either congenital or caused by accidents. Testing the radioactivity of imported and exported food materials is being done for the sake of public health. As an alternative to the corrugated tin, the environment-friendly, durable and cheap 'Jutton' has been produced by mixing jute with polypropylene.

186. The first Chemical Metrology Reference Laboratory under Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR) has been established in the country for chemical evaluation with a view to enhancing the acceptability of Bangladeshi products in the international market. With the objective of doing research to investigate and identify volume, determine methods for exploration, analyze quality and ensure proper use of mines and mineral resources of the country, the Institute of Mining, Mineralogy and Metallurgy at Joypurhat and a Micro-Biology Laboratory of international standard at BCSIR have been set up. A Food Technology Laboratory of international standards has also been established. Research is going on for innovating bio-fertilizer and bio-insecticide through use of bio-technology, for producing seeds of medicinal plants through tissue culture and for creating facilities for DNA finger-print. The government has taken steps to set up an

Oceanographic Research Institute at Cox's Bazar. Under this institute, research on marine resources will be conducted; measures are also being taken to set up a Marine Aquarium of international standard and to make it attractive to the tourists.

Mr. Speaker,

187. In accordance with the commitment of the present government to ensure and maintain free flow of information, the Right to Information Act, 2009 was passed on 29 March 2009 in the first session of the Ninth Jatiya Sangsad; and the Information Commission was duly constituted. Meanwhile, the Commission has started its activities in full swing. Under the Right to Information Act, Right to Information Rules, 2009 has been issued and other related rules, regulations are in the final stage of issuance. An organizational chart with requisite number of manpower for the Information Commission has been approved and land has been allotted for the construction of its permanent office building. In the meantime, the Information Commission has launched its own website. Sensitisation programmes are going on to make people aware about the Right to Information Act.

188. Consistent with its election pledge, the government has given permission to 14 Community Radios including a state-owned one to operate on 22 April 2010. These community radio stations will go into operation very soon. In order to expand the nationwide network of Bangladesh Betar, 12 FM transmitters have been added. Besides, contracts have been signed with German Radio Deutsche Welle and BBC World Service to transmit their programmes

through the transmitter of Bangladesh Betar; and also with Chinese Radio CRI and Japanese NHK to transmit their programmes in the country. Moreover, initiatives have been taken for installation of two full-fledged 10 KW FM radio stations at Mymensingh and Gopalganj. In 2010, two private satellite TV channels were accorded approval by the government.

189. Screening of obscene and vulgar films in cinema halls of the country and video piracy have been curbed to a great extent because of strict observance of related laws, rules and codes, enhanced actions of the taskforce and close monitoring by the officials of the Department of Mass Communication. The project named 'Modernisation and Expansion of BFDC' has been undertaken. The government's initiatives for building a film city on BFDC ground, cash grants to film-makers for good quality and aesthetic films, introduction of digital technology and other steps are contributing to bringing back soundness in the film industry. The government has distributed 24 national film awards in 23 categories for 2008 on 10 April 2010. The value of award money has been raised and the number of categories has also been increased from 23 to 25. Besides, there has been an increase in the grants for full length feature films, including 2 films for children and the amount of money was also enhanced with a view to upholding the true spirit of the liberation war and promoting aesthetic and artistic films. 'The Policy for Awarding Grants, 2010' has been updated. Initiatives have been taken to formulate the 'Films Clubs Registration Act, 2010' by repealing the previous 'Film Clubs Registration and Regulation Act 1980'. 'P-film Sanction Policy, 2010' has been approved.

Policy formulation for awarding grants for making quality short films is at a final stage. Bangladesh Film Censor Board issued censor certificates to 368 films including digital ones in 2010. Bangladesh Film Archives Direction and Management Policy, 2010 has been approved. A project for the development of film preservation, digitization for preservation of old films and the construction of Film Archives Building is in progress.

190. Through broadcast of various public awareness programmes and exhibitions of developmental films, the Department of Mass Communication has been playing an important role in involving the village people in development activities. The project titled 'Expansion and modernisation of PIB Complex' has been approved for the growth of training facilities for journalists. Initiatives have been taken to implement the project titled 'Media Campaign for Disseminating Outcome of A2I programme' under the 'Access to Information' project of Prime Minister's Office by Bangladesh Sangbad Sanstha.

191. The freedom of Press has been ensured as envisaged in article 39 of our Constitution. The Present government firmly believes in the freedom of press. Owing to the favourable atmosphere created during the tenure of the present government, the declaration of 226 newspapers has been authenticated till now. Department of Films and Publications has remade the historic speech of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu. It has also produced 64 documentary films, news documentary films and special news documentaries. Different national dailies and newspapers of the country have published special

supplements and articles on the occasion of national days of special significance. After assuming office, the present government has amended certain clauses of advertisement and supplement policy in order to flourish the newspaper industry as a whole.

Mr. Speaker,

192. The government is working to improve people's morality and socio-economic condition of the country by motivating them through religious education and awareness. Bangladesh is a country of communal harmony. The present government is committed to ensuring the constitutional rights of all communities and to enable the members of all religionists to celebrate their respective religious rituals in a cordial and harmonious atmosphere. For the last two years, the communities including the Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians have been celebrating their religious festivals with due solemnity, festivities and peace.

193. A record highest number of 90,696 pilgrims have performed Hajj during the year 2010, which is 32 thousand more than that of last year. The longstanding mismanagement in this sector has been removed. Proper air transport arrangements for the huge number of pilgrims were lauded by all quarters. In order to make the Hajj management more effective, the use of information technology has been further increased and provisions have been put in place to exchange information with pilgrims through SMS and by opening an interactive website. The overall Hajj activities have been successful this year by means of efficient management.

194. In the current fiscal year Tk 120 million has been allocated as grants for different religious institutions of the Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Christians, rehabilitation of poor Muslims, renovation and repair of Eid congregation grounds, graveyards and cemeteries. Tk 15 million has been allocated from Honourable Prime Minister's Relief and Welfare Fund for observing Durga Puja, the largest religious festival of the Hindus. In the current fiscal year, Tk 1.35 billion has been allocated in ADP budget against five development projects. Mosque-based Child and Mass Education Programme has been providing pre-primary and religious education to 1.2 million children, literacy to 38,400 elderly people and teaching of Holy Qu'ran to 2.1 million children and adolescents. Under the temple-based children and mass education programme in 32 selected districts, 250,000 children and adults have received pre-primary education and literacy respectively. Presently, such projects have been expanded throughout the country at a cost of Tk 712.5 million.

195. Various activities for the Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians are continuing alongside those for the Islamic religion. For the first time, the Christian Religious Welfare Trust has been established in the country. The Welfare Trust, Imam Training Academy and Human Resource Development Project are being executed by involving over 500,000 Imams and muazzins of 250,000 mosques. Religious leaders of the Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Christians have been involved in skill development and advancement of the country's people. Mass awareness is being generated by religious leaders on sanitation,

reproductive health, gender issues, dowry, safe motherhood, women's rights, safe drinking water and HIV/AIDS etc.

(G) Law & Order and Security of the State

Mr. Speaker,

196. With a view to implementing the separation of Judiciary within the constitutional framework and for giving it a practical shape, the Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Act, 2009 was passed in the parliament. As a result, the separation of Judiciary has got a permanent shape. The government executed the verdict of the long awaited Bangabandhu murder case after completion of hearings of appeals. The present government has passed the International Crimes Tribunal (Amendment) Act, 2009 in order to bring those who committed crimes against humanity, were involved in genocide and other war crimes under the purview of justice. Accordingly, a Tribunal has been established by appointing a Judge of the High Court Division as its Chairman and a Judge of the High Court Division and a retired District judge as its members. With a view to disposing the pending cases quickly, the government has appointed 45 Judges including 13 Permanent Judges and 32 Additional Judges in the High Court Division and 4 Judges in the Appellate Division of Bangladesh Supreme Court. Moreover, the government appointed 215 officers to the vacant posts of Assistant Judges/Judicial Magistrates through Bangladesh Judicial Service Commission and the appointment of 201 more Assistant Judges/ Judicial Magistrates is under the process. The government has allocated Tk 50 million for the High Court Division of the

Supreme Court primarily to bear the cost of connecting 200 courts at district level with the Supreme Court through internet network and also to develop the online cause-list management of those courts.

197. A project has been undertaken with an estimated cost of about Tk 8.7 billion for the construction of Chief Judicial Magistrate Court buildings all over the country between February 2009 and June 2014. Notification of award has already been issued to contractors selected for construction work in 10 districts. A project titled 'Construction of 20 District Registry Office Building and 63 Sub-Registry Office Building' is also being implemented. District Registry office buildings in 20 districts and Sub-Registry office buildings in 34 upazilas will be constructed and land for 23 Sub-Registry offices will be requisitioned under this project. Construction of 4 District Registry office buildings and 8 Sub-Registry office buildings has already been completed. Efforts are on to strengthen the activities of National Legal Aid Agency with a view to ensuring justice to the poor, disadvantaged and under-privileged litigants.

Mr. Speaker,

198. As a part of administrative reforms, the present Government has divided the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs into two Divisions called the 'Law and Justice Division' and 'Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division'. Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division provides assistance in drafting and scrutinising Acts, ordinances, rules, regulations, notifications, contracts, agreements at national and international levels. Compilation,

codification and consolidation of laws are some of the functions of this Division. The Constitution is going to be printed in the light of the verdict of Bangladesh Supreme Court on the fifth amendment of the Constitution in order to restore the noble spirit of the War of Liberation. For realizing the 'Vision 2021' and 'Digital Bangladesh', the updated versions of all the laws of the country have been presented on the website www.legislative.gov.bd. The National Human Rights Commission Act, 2009 has been passed for establishment of National Human Rights Commission. The Commission consists of a Chairman, a full-time Member and five other honorary Members. The Commission is pressing ahead with its activities as per law.

199. Three Technical Assistance projects relating to the Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division are under implementation. 'Promoting Access to Justice and Human Rights in Bangladesh' is one of them. This project has been functioning to ensure human rights and access to justice, simplify the judicial system, enhance strategic management capacity of the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, promote access to legal aid and enhance the efficacy of the judicial system by reforming laws. The second project is 'Policy Advocacy and Legislative Reforms', the main objective of which is to update the existing child-related laws and to strengthen the juvenile justice administration system in the country with a view to ensuring justice to children in a child-friendly manner. The third project is 'Implementation of CEDAW for Reducing Violence Against Women' with the objective of ensuring empowerment of women by formulating women-friendly laws in order to reduce violence against them.

200. The Armed Forces of Bangladesh have been playing a vital role in national development and progress by working together with the civil administration in order to safeguard independence and sovereignty, maintain peace, law & order and security with utmost sincerity and integrity. The government has taken multifaceted projects for capacity building of the Armed Forces. Such projects include plans to construct thirteen 14-storeyed residential buildings on a turn-key basis for solving the housing problems of officers; establish quality schools in different garrisons for developing the standard of education and to construct Bangabandhu Complex in Chittagong Cantonment under the Annual Development Programme. The monthly allowances for the members of the army taking part in UN peace keeping missions have been increased. The salary scale of JCOs is under the process of being elevated to 10th grade of the national pay-scale, which is applicable for class II gazetted officers. Besides, the ICT infrastructure of army is being developed by keeping in mind the establishment of a 'Digital Bangladesh'.

201. Some important ongoing projects of the army are: construction of 9 A-type, 56 B-type, 92 C-type officers' quarters and construction of 30 bachelor officers' quarter, 260 JCOs quarters, 290 quarters for different ranks and 50 followers' quarters. In addition, four office buildings in Dhaka, Sayedpur and Rajendrapur, 8,904 barracks for the soldiers in different cantonments, water purification plants in different cantonments, operation theatre in Mymensingh, three magazines in Gazipur, one ammunition store, three workshops and two tank transport shades in Gazipur are under process of construction. Under the project on

expansion and modernisation of the Dhaka CMH having a total outlay of Tk 810 million, the number of beds have been increased from 850 to 1050, while five new buildings have been constructed and three other buildings have been extended for outdoor patients; in addition, medical equipments have been procured. The Bogra CMH has been expanded and three cuff shades have been built at Savar and Jessore military farms; two ammunition stores have been constructed at Gazipur and Mymensingh and 11 tube-wells have been sunk and two garages built in different cantonments of the country.

202. Under the project titled "Cantonment Public School at Haliashahar, Chittagong, Cantonment Public School at Rajshahi", construction of academic buildings, residential buildings and procurement of educational instruments are under process at a cost of Tk 477 million with a view to creating better educational environment for the children of Chittagong and Rajshahi cantonments and adjacent areas by developing infrastructure and other related facilities. On the other hand construction of a 5-storeyed academic building, play-ground and procurement of educational instruments are underway through the project titled 'Establishment of Mirpur Cantonment Public School and College' in order to enable children living in Mirpur cantonment and adjacent areas to get opportunity for receiving education in a conducive environment.

203. To improve educational facilities for the Navy, 2 academic buildings are being constructed and ancillary educational equipments are being procured to ensure better educational facilities for the children of Chittagong and

Khulna under the project 'Construction of Academic Buildings including Ancillary Works for BN Schools & colleges'. Sixteen Bachelor officers' quarters, 92 officers' quarters, 91 BOQ, 112 JCO's quarters have been built for Bangladesh Navy in Dhaka and Chittagong from the revenue budget. 534 Naval colonies have been built in Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna and SM Barracks for 226 persons have been constructed in Khulna. Besides, one office building and 1 sailors' training building have been constructed in Khulna and two office buildings have been built in Chittagong.

204. One officers' quarter and eight bachelor officers' quarters have been built for Bangladesh Air Force from the revenue budget. Barracks for 42 soldiers of MODC in different air bases have been constructed. The construction of 52 B-type, 100 C-type quarter and 18-BOQ and 286 warrant officers' quarters, 32 Sergeant barracks, three office buildings, one academic building and barrack for 200 MODC soldiers, 24 Batman quarters and substation building perimeter line of the Bashar Air Base of Bangladesh Air force is going on.

205. A project known as the extension of the Defence Services Command and Staff College (DSCSC) is being implemented at Mirpur Cantonment at an estimated cost of Tk 805 million. Under the project, an eight-storied academic building and a 14-storied residential building will be constructed for the teachers, trainees and other officials for providing training to local and foreign military officials. A project for construction of residential facilities and other works related to the National Defence College (NDC) is

being implemented at a cost of Tk 608.2 million. 9-storied E-type and 4 storied C/D type buildings will be constructed for the local and foreign trainees of the college under the project. Construction of an Administrative Building, Auditorium, Hostel and Playground has been completed at Feni Girl's Cadet College. In addition, construction of a 8-storied hostel, C/D Type residential building and other related facilities have been completed to provide graduate and post-graduate degrees to the military and non-military students of Military Institute of Science & Technology (MIST) at Mirpur Cantonment. Moreover, measures have been taken to construct an auditorium, academic & residential building, procure necessary equipment, furniture and develop related facilities of Bangladesh Military Academy for armed forces cadet, civil service officers, BNCC, teachers etc. under the project 'Construction of BMA Bangabandhu Complex'.

206. Skilled manpower have been trained at Bangladesh Space Research and Remote Sensing Organization (SPARSO), while research centres with equipment have also been established. The organization has been playing a significant role in observing the environment and in alleviation of poverty by providing satellite-based information. SPARSO has also been drawing a map of the coastal area by incorporating valuable information under the project titled 'United Nations Convention for Law of the Sea' of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This work will play a vital role in determining the maritime boundary of Bangladesh. SPARSO has accepted the membership of the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization (APSCO).

which has created scope for regional cooperation in space research and technology.

207. Establishment of a digital mapping centre in Dhaka, collection of all geo-information in digital format instead of analogue format, creation of digital topographical maps of the whole of Bangladesh and collection of digital, aerial and satellite images and data of maps will be done through a project named "Improvement of Digital Mapping Systems of Survey of Bangladesh" under Bangladesh Department of Survey. Also under this project, 160 digital topographic maps in 1:5,000 scale of the five Divisional Headquarters (Chittagong, Khulna, Barisal, Rajshahi and Sylhet) of Bangladesh, 160 sheets of digital database and 954 map sheets in 1:25,000 scale of the whole country will be prepared.

208. Many effective measures have been undertaken to improve law and order situation and to ensure security of life and property of the general masses, which was one of the important election pledges of the present government. Significant improvements in law and order situation have been observed all over the country during the last two years. To maintain law and order and peace in the industrial areas, the Industrial Police has started functioning from 31 October 2010. Community policing programme with spontaneous community participation is going on effectively to combat crimes. The government has accepted the challenge of tackling extremism, terrorism, extortion, drug offences and eve-teasing with utmost importance. In addition to that, eviction programme from illegally occupied government land and unauthorised establishments on the river banks is

going on. Effective measures have been taken to contain human trafficking. On the other hand, 2,761 old, seriously ill and long-serving convicts have been released. Various programmes have been taken to reduce traffic congestion and road accidents.

209. The government has decided in principle to create 32,031 additional posts in Bangladesh Police. Out of these, 14,971 posts including 1,580 posts for industrial police forces have already been created. Among these, recruitment against 9,111 posts has already been completed. The government is going to purchase 875 Pick-up Vans and 2,913 motorcycles for the police force. For the first time, a contingent of 160 female police has been sent to Haiti to work in the UN peace-keeping mission. 62 Thanas (police stations) of the country have been developed as model Thanas. Besides, seven complexes for the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) are being built with an estimated cost of Tk 4.4 billion. A training base for Coast Guard is under construction at Patuakhali at a cost of Tk 421.2 million. In addition, 5 defender Fast Boats have been received from the US Navy as aid and 20 Tornado Boats were obtained through government purchases for strengthening the Coast Guards. To ensure border security, construction of 50 Border Sentry Posts (BSP) has been completed under a project for constructing 119 Border Sentry Posts. Building of four 50 bed hospitals for the Border Guard at the cost of Tk 1.88 billion, 80 border outposts at a cost of Tk 540 million and 4 training centres for the police are in the final stage. A Memorial Museum has been set up at Dhaka Central Jail, where Bangabandhu and four national leaders spent their historic captivity in jail. Besides this,

construction of a jail training institute and 14 district jails are being implemented under 6 development projects. By this time, the only female jail of the country at Kashimpur of Gazipur district and 3 other central jails have started functioning. The daily allowance for absorbed Ansars has been increased from Tk 110 to Tk 180. Presently the members of the police service, firemen up to Station Officers of fire services and jail wardens are receiving Tk 330, Tk 400 and Tk 400 respectively as risk allowance. All members of the Police, Bangladesh Border Guards, Fire Service, Battalion Ansar and Jail Police have been brought under 100 percent ration system within this tenure of the Government. The symbol of our cultural heritage 'traditional boat' has been reinstated in the Monogram of the Police.

210. The ministry of Home Affairs has effected a major change in existing passport and visa rules and made the whole package easier, accommodative and updated. Introduction of Machine Readable Passport (MRP) and Machine Readable Visa (MRV) project at a cost of Tk 5.26 billion is a remarkable success of this government. Now, 34 offices in the country and 67 Bangladesh missions abroad are rendering MRP & MRV services. Through MRP & MRV project, the acceptability of Bangladeshi passports has been increased, which has also brightened our image abroad.

211. The government has enacted the Speedy Trial (amendment) Act, 2009 & 2010; The Father of the Nation's Family Members' Security Act, 2009; Mobile Court Act, 2009; Acid Control Act, 2010; Bangladesh Rifles (amendment) Act, 2010; Border Guard Bangladesh Act,

2010; Battalion Ansar (amendment) Act, 2010; Barisal Metropolitan Police Act, 2009; Sylhet Metropolitan Police Act, 2009; Police Dress Rule, 2004 (amendment); Cost Guard Officers-Staff Service Rules, 2010; Non Cadre Ansar Officers & Staff Recruitment Rules, 2010; Highway Police Rules, 2009; and Bangladesh Passport Rules (amendment), 2004. Besides, the enactment process of Citizenship Act, Pornography Control Act, Human Trafficking and Protection Act and amendment process of the Extradition Act, 1974 and Anti Terrorism Act, 2009 are going on. Section 509 of the Penal Code has been included in the schedule of the mobile court act in order to curb eve-teasing.

212. The Government is determined to ensure the trial of all terrorist activities including the killing of four national leaders in jail, grenade attack of 21 August and 10 truck arms haul case. The trial of BDR mutiny will be completed soon. In the meantime, verdicts in 10 BDR mutiny cases have been delivered. The trial of remaining 6 cases is expected to be finished by March 2011. Moreover, the trial of the brutal killings and lootings at BDR headquarter started on 05 January 2011.

Mr. Speaker,

213. The foreign policy of Bangladesh and related institutions had started to evolve under the guidance of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Following the footsteps of Bangabandhu, the Honourable Prime Minister has already taken initiatives to expand the sphere of our international relations. It is manifested through rebuilding Bangladesh's image as a secular and democratic

nation by re-establishing the values of our independence in national life, mutual trust and confidence in bilateral relations with neighbouring and other countries, removing inertia in our relations with the Muslim world and effective participation in the United Nations and other international organizations. We are now reaping the benefits of the foreign policy 'Friendship to all and malice to none' declared by the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, which is enshrined in the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

214. The foreign policy of the present government has already succeeded in establishing Bangladesh as a responsible, effective and capable nation in the international arena. Bangladesh has been lending support to the UN initiatives for establishing democracy, human rights, peace and security across the globe and with the same spirit has taken effective and fruitful actions against terrorists and extremists at home and abroad. The declaration of the Honourable Prime Minister on denying the soil of Bangladesh for any act of terror and implementation measures for that has brought appreciation for Bangladesh from the international community. In the same spirit, Bangladesh has ratified all anti-terrorism conventions of the United Nations. Bangladesh has been keeping confidence on the mandate of the United Nations in establishing world peace, eliminating conflicts and maintaining collective security in the world. Bangladesh has already topped the list of countries sending troops to the international peace-keeping missions.

215. The pragmatic and statesmanlike actions and initiatives of Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina have started to bear fruit in the enhancement of our relations with the international community. You must have noticed that the Honourable Prime Minister herself is taking the leading role in diplomatic efforts. The Honourable Prime Minister participated in the debate of the 65th session of the United Nations General Assembly, wherein she highlighted the achievements of Bangladesh in attaining the Millennium Development Goals related to eradication of hunger and poverty. As you know, Bangladesh has received MDG-2010 award in recognition of her success in attaining the Millennium Development Goals.

216. In addition to practicing democracy and upholding human rights inside the country, Bangladesh has been offering support and assistance to all positive international initiatives. In continuation of these efforts, the government has explained in detail to the outside world about the transparency, non-partisanship and lawfulness of the process of war crimes trial, which have led to its international acceptance. Bangladesh has been playing an important role in enhancing regional cooperation to tackle terrorism in the SAARC-member countries. It is to be noted that, Bangladesh is associated with 12 out of 13 conventions/protocols adopted under the auspices of the United Nations and at the international level to exterminate terrorism. Bangladesh has also been taking steps in this regard in concert with the international community.

Mr. Speaker,

217. The fundamental pillar of our foreign policy is to maintain friendly relations and cooperation with the neighbouring countries of South Asia. During the last two years, the government has taken effective steps for developing excellent relationships with neighbouring countries. During Honourable Prime Minister's visit to India in January 2010, three agreements relating to legal support in criminal matters, exchange of convicted prisoners upon completion of jail sentences, combating international terrorism, organized crimes and illegal trafficking of narcotic drugs and a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) regarding cooperation in the field of energy were concluded between the two countries. In the light of the Joint Communiqué, positive developments have taken place in discussions on demarcation of un-demarcated land boundary, exchange of enclaves, demarcation of adversely possessed lands, water sharing of common rivers including Teesta, removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers to minimise trade imbalance etc. Initiatives have been taken to frame a comprehensive water policy for this region to preserve water resources and their appropriate use, ensure Bangladesh's due share of water and to resolve existing water shortages and ensure regional water security under sub-regional cooperation with India, Nepal and Bhutan. Besides, specific measures have been taken to preserve the interests of Bangladesh in the discussions for delimitation of maritime boundary with India and Myanmar.

Mr. Speaker,

218. The relationship between Bangladesh and China has been further deepened following the Honourable Prime Minister's official visit to China in March 2010 and the Chinese Vice President's visit to Bangladesh in June 2010. During these visits, agreements and MoUs have been signed by the two countries on economic and technical assistance and cooperation in the energy sector. After a gap of one decade, the Honourable Prime Minister visited the Republic of Korea in May 2010; during that visit, memorandum of understanding on economic, energy and environmental cooperations has been concluded. While visiting Malaysia, the Honourable Prime Minister had fruitful discussion with the Malaysian Prime Minister on simplification of manpower recruitment procedures and recruitment of more manpower from Bangladesh. During the official visit of the Honourable Prime Minister to Japan in November 2010, a decision has been taken in principle to relax the rules of origin criteria under Japanese GSP scheme for augmenting knitted apparel exports from Bangladesh.

219. The present government has taken special initiatives to increase cooperation with the Muslim world. Following the visits of Honourable Prime Minister to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar, a platform of cooperation has been created in many areas including manpower export, energy security and river-dredging. With European countries also, cooperation has evolved in the fields of energy, food security, health, education, anti-terrorism, etc. Presently, Europe is one of the main development and trade partners of Bangladesh. As the first Prime Minister from Bangladesh,

Honourable Prime Minister visited Sweden in October 2009. She had fruitful bilateral discussion with the Russian Prime Minister during the International Tiger Summit in Saint Petersburg on Russian cooperation in the fields of power and energy including nuclear power plant. Besides, during the two years of the present government, Bangladesh's relationship with the United States has been further reinforced.

220. The proposals and concepts, contained in the Honourable Prime Minister's speech at the 16th SAARC Summit held in Bhutan in April 2010 were reflected in the joint declaration of the Summit. A convention on cooperation in environmental matters and agreement on services were concluded at the Summit. The 'SAARC Democracy Charter' presented by Bangladesh at the Summit is expected to consolidate democracy in SAARC member countries.

221. In view of Bangladesh's enhanced acceptability in the international arena, the country has achieved exceptional successes in the elections of all international organizations over the last two years. Notable among these are: elections to the executive board of UNDP, UNICEF, UNEP, UNESCO, WHO and ITU, as well as ECOSOC, UN Human Rights Council and CEDAW.

222. In implementing the foreign policy of Bangladesh, the efforts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and our Bangladesh Missions abroad has augmented the visibility of Bangladesh in the international arena manifold. A decision in principle has already been approved to open 19 new

diplomatic missions/sub-missions across the globe including in the South American and African continents by enhancing the capacity of the Ministry in order to operate diplomatic activities more effectively for making our international presence more effective. This initiative would ensure the presence of Bangladesh in the remote areas of the world, enhance Bangladesh's positive image abroad along with expanded labour markets and increased exports.

223. The Honourable Prime Minister's visionary leadership has been successful in projecting Bangladesh's image as a secular, democratic, progressive and responsible state in the international arena in conformity with our constitutional commitment. I firmly believe that this trend will continue.

(H) Environment and Climate

Mr. Speaker,

224. Pollution-free environment is an essential ingredient for a healthy life. However, environment is deteriorating every moment due to various human interventions. The environmental problems are getting worse day by day because of the pressure of ever increasing population, poverty and climate change. With a view to overcoming the environmental problems, the government has enacted the Environmental Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2010. In order to prevent environmental degradation, the government has included restriction on hill cutting or razing, pollution from ship-breaking and wetland-related issues in the Environmental Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2010. The

government has also enacted Environmental Court (Amendment) Act, 2010. As a result, environment courts will be set up in all districts of the country.

225. Bangladesh is the most vulnerable country to climate change. A Climate Change Trust Fund has been established and 'Climate Change Trust Act, 2010' has been enacted in order to deal with the adverse impacts of climate change. For facilitating essential activities to address climate change issues, an amount of Tk 14 billion has been allocated during 2009-10 and 2010-11 fiscal years for creating Climate Change Trust Fund and undertaking programmes through it. The Environmental Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2010 has been brought under the jurisdiction of Mobile Courts for taking immediate actions against environmental polluters. Up to November 2010, an amount of Tk 54.9 million has been realized as fines from 92 industries for polluting the environment and Tk 209,000 has been realized through mobile courts from polluters who polluted the air from transports. During the current year, Tk 3.15 million has been realized through 160 mobile courts in order to prevent people from using banned polythene bags. Furthermore, 110 tons of polythene bags have been confiscated through this process.

226. The government has prepared the draft Ship Breaking Waste and Dangerous Waste Management Rules-2010 for ensuring proper environmental management in ship-breaking industry. A guideline has also been developed for environmental management of ship-breaking yards, waste refining and protection of the health of workers and staff. The Solid Waste Management Rules-2010 has been

formulated in order to manage solid waste in an environment-friendly way. The framing of Radio-Active and Electronic Waste Management Rules-2010, 3R (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) Strategy as well as the amendment of Brick Burning (Control) Act, 1989 are in the final stage. Besides, initiatives have been taken for updating the Environment Policy-1992 and enacting Bio-safety Rules-2010. National Environment Awards have been introduced in 2009 for motivating mass people of the country on environmental conservation and development.

227. Buriganga, Shitalakkha, Turag and Balu rivers have been declared as Ecological Critical Area (ECA) for taking necessary actions to improve environmental condition of these rivers. The government has started a 5-year project titled "Clean Air and Sustainable Environment Project" from July 2009 at a cost of Tk 4.87 billion for controlling air pollution in the country's major cities including Dhaka. Modern technology-based brick kiln system with low emissions has also been introduced.

228. The government has formulated Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) to deal with the adverse impacts of climate change. Bangladesh Climate Change Resilient Fund (BCCRF) has been created with support from development partners. The development partners including UK has committed to provide a support of US\$ 113.5 million for the resilient fund. The carbon stock of the Sundarban has been assessed in order to protect the forest and mobilise financial resources from international arena through enhancing carbon stock under REDD (Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest

Degradation) mechanism. The carbon stock assessment of other forests is also progressing.

229. In the meantime, the government has taken various initiatives for conservation and expansion of forests. Several programmes have been undertaken by dividing the total 758,000 acre of denuded forest-land into core zone and buffer zone. About 170,000 hectare of newly formed char-land in the coastal belt has been brought under the forestation program. Forestation programme on 7,000 km embankment of Bangladesh Water Development Board in the coastal area has also been progressing very well. The Social Forestation Rules has been amended to expand the dimension of social forestry. Besides, 17,000 km roadside plantation programme has been started in addition to existing 60,000 km roadside plantation; around 500,000 beneficiaries have been brought under this programme.

230. Bangladesh is very rich in biodiversity. Steps have been taken to conserve biodiversity at Bangabandhu Safari Park, which is being created at Gazipur over 3,800 acre area. As the first aviary of the country, Sheikh Russel Aviary is going to be established in Chittagong. The Wild Animal Conservation Act, 2010 has been enacted to update the Wild Life Act of 1974. For further strengthening of forest conservation, the amendment process of the Forest Act, 1927 is in the final stage. Opportunities for rearing Spotted Deer have been created through enacting Bangladesh Spotted Deer Rearing Regulations-2009. Bangladesh Tiger Action Plan has been framed for conservation of tigers in the Sundarban. Compensation for the victims attacked by wild animals has been ensured through promulgation of

Compensation Regulations-2010. Besides, the Forest Product Transportation (Control) Rules-2010 has been approved and initiative has been taken to update the Forest Policy in order to ensure conservation and expansion of forests. Furthermore, the Tree Conservation Act, 2010 has been formulated for conserving valuable tree species of the country. As a significant initiative to protect vultures from extinction, use of Dyclofen has been banned in treatment of animals.

231. The process of selecting seven natural wonders of the world is underway. In order to solicit vote for the Sundarban, various initiatives have been taken. If the Sundarban is elected as one of the seven natural wonders of the world through voting, the image of Bangladesh will be bolstered considerably. For special contribution to conservation of wild animals and trees, a National award titled "Bangabandhu Award for Wildlife Conservation" has been declared in three categories. The government has also declared Mango tree as the 'National Tree' of the country.

232. Approval of Bangladesh Rubber Policy, 2010 will remain as a milestone in the field of rubber cultivation and industry in the country. The country, for the first time, held the 'Rubber Fair-2010'. In the meantime, The Rubber Board Act, 2010 has been formulated and is in the process of approval. Furthermore, initiatives have been taken to carry out taxonomic study of flora and fauna to develop a National Biodiversity Register for the country.

Mr. Speaker,

233. An old system of revenue management is still in vogue in the land administration departments of the country. In July of 2010-11 fiscal year, about Tk 30 million was spent for purchasing computers for 469 Upazila Land Offices in order to gear up service delivery to the citizens and to establish good governance by bringing highest level of transparency, accountability and dynamism in land management activities. The government has earned Tk 2.42 billion land development tax during last fiscal year (2009-10). In addition, inspection, monitoring and evaluation activities have been emphasised to ensure harassment-free service delivery to citizens from the land offices. A large training programme and motivational activities have been undertaken to make the officers and staff interested in leading honest lives and becoming effective service-providers. Construction of 100 upazila land offices and 200 union land offices are in progress under the "Upazila and Union Land Office Construction and Repair Project (Phase-5)": among these, construction work of 55 upazila land offices and 65 union land offices have been completed. During the current fiscal year, construction work of 45 upazila and 135 union land offices are going on.

234. With a view to reducing poverty, the government has distributed 24,069 acres khas land among 63,941 landless families of the country during the last two years. A target to allot 5,000 acres undisputed agricultural khas land to the landless people has been set for the 2010-11 fiscal year. Besides, the government has ratified the "Jal-mahal Management policy-2009" for proper implementation of the

principle "Fisheries belong to the fishermen". As per the provisions of the aforesaid policy, 142 Jal-mahals have been leased out to different cooperative societies of fishermen under development projects.

235. To ensure the best use of land, the government has enacted "The Balumohal and Mati Management Act, 2010". In order to make smooth disposal and management of the vested properties, the "Arpita Sampatti Prottarpan (amendment) Act, 2009" has been placed before the Jatiya Sangsad. The Department of Land Records and Survey has taken initiatives to conduct digital survey and to prepare digital maps and khatians (records of right) of all landowners of Bangladesh in order to implement the vision of "Digital Bangladesh". As a part of this initiative, digital survey of 5 mouzas of Savar Upazila of Dhaka district is going on. A pilot project named "Computerization of Land Management System of Dhaka District" has been undertaken to digitize the land management system of 5 upazilas of Dhaka. Besides, digital survey of 41 mouzas of Palash upazila under Narsindhi district has been started in the 2010-11 fiscal year; the programme will be subsequently extended to all 64 districts of the country.

236. The government has rehabilitated 3,990 landless families in 90 Guchho-grams under the poverty reduction programme. In addition, the rehabilitation work of 1,875 landless families in 40 new Guchho-grams is going on; sinking of 399 tube-wells, establishment of 77 multi-purpose halls and earth filling through food for work programme is continuing in 87 Guchho-grams during the current fiscal year. In order to improve the socio-economic condition of

the rehabilitated families, the government has provided Tk 54 million to BRDB for imparting income generating training and providing loan to them.

237. One of the important commitments of the government is to arrange housing for the poor. A total of 108,343 families have been rehabilitated in CI sheet barrack houses constructed at a cost of Tk 5.58 billion under the 2nd phase of Asrayan Project, which was scheduled to be completed by 31 December 2010. Destitute families have been rehabilitated by constructing concrete barracks in the 'Aila' affected areas of Satkhira, Bagerhat and Khulna. To alleviate the misery of victims of natural calamities, the old barrack houses in the coastal belt regions have been renovated while further renovation work will be taken up in the future. With a view to rehabilitating 50,000 landless and homeless destitute families, a project titled Ashrayan-2 has been taken up at an estimated cost of Tk 11.69 billion. Due to adverse effects of global climate change, a large part of the coastal region of the country is at a risk of being submerged under water. With the objective of saving the destitute people of this area, programmes are underway to construct concrete barracks for each five to ten families through Asrayan-2 Project.

238. With a view to improving the socio-economic conditions of 20,000 aborigines in plain-land (outside Chittagong Hill Tracts), a development programme at a cost of Tk 86 million has been implemented during the 2009-10 fiscal year. Moreover, Tk 120 million has been allocated for the same purpose during the current fiscal year. The aborigines have been provided with income generating

training and micro-credit, scholarships, educational equipments and education supports through this project. They are also being assisted through construction and repair of tube-wells, sanitary latrines, community centres and religious institutions.

239. Foreign aid amounting to Tk 36.12 billion against 1172 projects in the NGO sector has been released through NGO Affairs Bureau during 2009-10 fiscal year. 207 new NGOs have been registered during this period, thereby raising the number of foreign aided NGOs to 2107.

240. The “Coastal Land Zoning Project” is being implemented for ensuring the planned and proper use of land in agriculture, livestock and forest sectors, shrimp cultivation, industrial zones, tourism and natural biodiversity zones and resolve conflicts in land use in order to get maximum return from land for socio-economic development of the country. At present, “The Char Development and Settlement Project (CDSP-3)” is being implemented in Noakhali, Luxmipur and Chittagong. Under the purview of the project, 13,567 acres of khas-land will be allotted among 9500 landless families.

(D) Public Administration

Mr. Speaker,

241. The government is implementing various programmes in a bid to establish good governance in the country and create an effective, efficient, accountable and service-oriented administration. To assist various good governance activities, a project titled “Supporting the Good

Governance Programmes” has been taken up. In response to the demand of the local people and with the objective of delivering government services quickly to them, a new division named ‘Rangpur Division’ has been established. A national monitoring committee headed by the Cabinet Secretary has been put in place for ensuring proper implementation of social safety net programmes, which is now working properly and effectively.

242. To incorporate the observance of National Mourning Day on 15 August in the allocation of business of the Cabinet Division, the Schedule I of the Rules of Business, 1996 has been amended on 30 March 2010. The 35th martyrdom day of the architect and Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was observed with due respect as the National Mourning Day on 15 August 2010 all over the country under the supervision of the Cabinet Division. The “Bangladesh National Anthem, Flag and Emblem (Amendment) Act, 2010” has been published in the Bangladesh gazette, fixing punishment for violation of any provision of the National Anthem, Flag and Emblem Order and any rules formulated under it.

243. The present government has articulated in its election pledges a firm stance against corruption. The government has taken numerous positive and courageous steps to reform and strengthen institutional structure in order to prevent corruption. With this end in view, an initiative has been taken to amend the existing Anti Corruption Act. which is in the final stage now.

Mr. Speaker,

244. The government is continuing its efforts to transform the civil service into a pro-people and people-friendly one by attuning it to the needs of the 21st century through administrative reforms. With these objectives and in pursuance of the constitutional obligations, a process is underway to formulate the 'Civil Service Act', by means of which it will be possible for the first time to bring the whole of civil service under the ambit of a legal framework. The process of considering merit and efficiency as the criteria for promotion has been ensured while the practice of placing competent officials in appropriate positions is being followed. Besides, steps have been taken to update the promotion rules, restructure field administration, make clusters of Ministries/Divisions, and formulate career plans for civil servants. In addition, introduction of performance-based evaluation system (PBES) is underway on a pilot basis in place of the traditional annual confidential report (ACR) with the objective of making public administration more accountable.

245. Compulsory training programmes of various durations are being conducted by the Ministry of Establishment through different government training institutes for newly recruited young officials coming from varied social and academic backgrounds, knowledge, experiences and perceptions, with the objective of enabling them to adjust with the new environment in accordance with the needs of their respective organizations. To achieve this goal, the ministry is working on preparing an updated national training policy. In order to enhance the efficiency of the officials, compulsory trainings are being arranged regularly both at home and abroad on contemporary issues like governance, public policy, gender, climate change,

negotiation skill, public procurement, change management, computers and communicative English.

246. In order to facilitate instant communications between the Ministries and the offices of Divisional Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners and Upzila Nirbahi Officers, and make the officials IT-oriented, 665 laptops with internet connectivity have been supplied to them.

Mr. Speaker,

247. We are passing through a historic juncture. The forward-march for building a prosperous nation has now commenced with the relentless initiatives and dynamic endeavours of the present government and massive participation of all segments of the population. The achievements and progress at this juncture will remain as a unique example in the annals of the nation.

248. The practice and flourishing of democracy are essential preconditions for prosperity and development of the nation. Democracy is a holistic concept in the area of governance. It cannot be achieved in fragments. Although this march of democracy is long and continuous, it is not adorned with flowers. The parliament is the focal point in the practice of democracy. The active participation of the treasury and the opposition acts as the nucleus of democratic exercise. I shall expect that all members of parliament will make significant contribution to the development and progress of the nation by actively participating in this great Sangsad. The practice of democracy is hindered if national politics revolves around personal issues, material interests or subjects under the jurisdiction of courts. The anti-liberation

quarters may become active any moment to foil democracy, obstruct the trial of war-criminals and embarrass the elected government. They can create divisions and artificial crisis of confidence in the country. The countrymen should remain ever-vigilant and alert so that the democratic advancement achieved through innumerable sacrifices is not jeopardised.

249. The brave sons of history have presented us a country in exchange for their lives. Our responsibility is to gear up the gradual flourishing and progress of this country and nation. The problems and obstacles faced by the toiling masses of Bangladesh are enormous. A nation which sheds blood for her language, sacrifices 3 million lives for independence, spills blood on the road for democracy, crosses rugged terrain with boundless patience, that infinitely promising nation shall once again succeed in holding its head high on the global podium. I am optimistic that we shall succeed in building the Sonar Bangla (Golden Bengal) as dreamt by Bangabandhu through all-out and collective efforts and participation. Our debt to the martyrs of 1971 can never be repaid. We shall be able to show our respect and gratitude to them only by ensuring the country's advancement.

I extend my thanks to you all.

Joi Bangla
Joi Bangabandhu

Khoda Hafez
May Bangladesh Live Forever.