Bangladesh is now being termed a development role model not only in South Asia but among all developing countries of the world. Over the years, and especially in the last seven years, the country has seen robust economic growth, stable macroeconomic outlook, landmark infrastructural undertakings and a consistently upward trend in improvement of human and social development indicators. Under the leadership and policies of the current government led by Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the country has received global praise for its economic, social and human development successes.

At the crux of these achievements lie the overall visions and various personal people-oriented initiatives of the current government. Before coming to power in 2009, HPM Sheikh Hasina announced “Vision 2021”, the plan to transform Bangladesh into a middle income country by 2021, and “Digital Bangladesh”, the desire to turn the country into a technologically advanced one. Both these visions stand realized substantially, as Bangladesh is now a lower middle income country from a lower income one for the first time since its independence. Massive digitization has resulted in Bangladesh being dubbed as the next information and communications technology (ICT) hub.

Now, the government is aiming to make Bangladesh a higher middle income nation to fulfills its Vision 2021 pledge, and even aiming for “Vision 2041”, the aspiration to turn Bangladesh into a developed country by the year 2041. This publication, the second of its kind from the Centre for Research and Information (CRI), looks at the principal developments which have taken place in Bangladesh in 2015, signifying its progress and march ahead.
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Bangladesh has achieved 6.55% growth of its Gross Domestic Product in the 2014-15 fiscal year. This was consistent with the average 6.2% economic growth the country has experienced since HPM Sheikh Hasina led Awami League government came to power in 2009. Between 2010 and 2015, Bangladesh on an average registered GDP growth around 6.5%. Given the robust rate of growth, the government has now targeted 7% GDP growth in the current 2015-16 fiscal year. Under the recently formulated and adopted Seventh Five Year Plan (2016-2020), the government seeks to raise the GDP growth rate progressively from 6.5% to 8% by 2020.

Updated records published by the World Bank in July 2015 showed that the erstwhile low income Bangladesh has moved up to a lower-middle income country, by joining those with annual incomes ranging between $1,046 to $4,125. According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), the per capita income in Bangladesh rose from $1,190 in 2014 to $1,316 in December 2015. The current government had targeted to transform Bangladesh into a middle income country, under its “Vision 2021”. Bangladesh now aims to become a higher-middle income country by 2021 and no longer carry the tag of a least developed country (LDC) and a developed nation by 2041 (current government’s “Vision 2041”). Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has directed the authorities concerned to frame the next Perspective Plan (2021-2040) to realize that vision.
The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) upgraded the overall country rating of Bangladesh by one notch in June 2015. The country was moved to category 5 from category 6, behind only India among the South Asian countries. The major reasons for the promotion were the resilience of the Bangladesh economy and the high and stable growth for well over a decade. OECD stated that due to long spells of macroeconomic stability, Bangladesh has now become a new frontier market, shifting away from a highly development aid-dependent nation.

Owing to the general trend of robust growth, Asian Development Bank has forecasted that Bangladesh is headed in the right direction to secure 6.7% GDP growth in the 2015-16 fiscal year. CNN Money has commented that Bangladesh's GDP growth will be the third highest in the world in 2016, exceeding China's. The country's GDP growth is set to record 6.8% in 2016. The forecast was prepared by CNN Money on the basis of data compiled by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Bangladesh was in the 5th position in 2015 in terms of attaining higher economic growth. CNN Money had earlier in the year predicted that in 2019, Bangladesh will be the second fastest growing economy in the world.

On a similar note, Bangladesh is set to emerge as the world’s 23rd largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) by 2050, according to projections by the UK-based PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) in a report published in February 2015. Currently, Bangladesh’s GDP is the 38th largest in the world in terms of PPP. The PwC projected that Bangladesh’s economy will surpass that of Australia and Malaysia within the given timeframe. The country’s GDP size, according to the PwC, was $536 billion in 2014 in PPP terms. The Bangladesh economy is expected to be worth $1.291 trillion in 2030 and $3.367 trillion in 2050.

Allocation of budget and annual development expenditure has increased almost 57% and 75% respectively in 2014 and 2015 compared to that of fiscal year 2013-14. The size of the national development budget has marked almost a threefold rise compared to that of 2006. Last year, the budgetary allocation for national development stood at $12.34 billion, up from a mere amount worth $3.1 billion just even a decade back. According to the ‘Open Budget Survey 2015’ report by the budget analysis group ‘International Budget Partnership (IBP),’ Bangladesh is ahead of all its South Asian neighbours including India in budget transparency.
1.5 RECORD REMITTANCE EARNINGS

Bangladesh's remittance earnings stood at $4.8 billion only in 2006. In the 2014-15 fiscal year, the flow of inward remittances crossed the record $15 billion-mark. Remittances sent by Bangladeshis working abroad reached $15.31 billion, a record in the country's history in 2014-15, marking a 7.6% growth over the previous fiscal. During the first half of this fiscal year, expatriates sent an amount worth $7.45 billion marking a 30% rise compared to the earnings in the corresponding period of previous fiscal year. The phenomenal growth in remittance is directly attributed to the growing number of Bangladeshi overseas workers, courtesy of the current government's proactive labour diplomacy which opened up new markets for manpower export. In the first ten months of 2015, more Bangladeshi workers went abroad than the entire year before. According to statistics of the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET), over 4,50,000 male and 90,000 female workers migrated to different countries until November 10, 2015. The numbers stood at around 4,25,000 and 76,007, respectively, at the end of 2014. Under the Seventh Five Year Plan 2016-2020, the government aims to create further 2 million jobs for Bangladeshi overseas workers.

1.6 FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVES SOAR

Bangladesh saw its foreign exchange reserves cross an all-time high of $28 billion threshold in February 2016. This means that the country’s foreign exchange reserves registered a whopping 27 times increase in 15 years. Lest it be forgotten, in 2001, the country had to defer its payments to the Asian Clearing Union (ACU) for imports to avoid compromising the $1 billion foreign exchange reserve as that would undermine its global image. But last year, the reserves hit over $27 billion for the third time. The reserves were enough to cover the country’s imports for approximately eight months. Lower import of raw materials due to improved backward linkages, and less import of food for better local production helped cut import bills to boost the forex reserves.
Throughout 2015, the country has seen increase in its export earnings and basket. The government has set an export target of $33.5 billion for the current financial year. The target is 7.38% more than the 2014-15 fiscal year. In 2014-15, Bangladesh earned $31.2 billion from exports, which itself marked a 3.35% rise from the previous fiscal year. This growth is continuing in the current fiscal year. Bangladesh’s export earnings in the first six months of the current 2015-16 fiscal year exceeded target by 1.38%. Thus, in totality, Bangladesh’s export earnings in 2015 stood at $32.37 billion which was $30.41 billion in 2014. Furthermore, under the Seventh Five Year Plan 2016-2020, the government aims to increase export earnings of more than $30 billion to more than $54 billion.
The number of people dependent on others for livelihood has dropped by 8% over the last five years thanks to their increasing participation in the economy, according to a survey conducted and published by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). The national dependency ratio stood at 58% in 2013, down from 66% in 2009. A nearly equal number of people were employed in jobs in rural and urban areas during the period.

### DECLINE IN DEPENDENCE RATIO

According to a research published in October 2015 by the international financial service organization, Credit Suisse, Bangladeshi have their amount of economic wealth increased by threefold in the space of last 15 years, while that of adult citizens has doubled. Country's adult population was 70.2 million in 2000, which grew to 100.7 million by mid-2015. Correspondingly, the said group commanded a wealth worth $237 billion in 2015, up from $78 billion, with the per capita wealth of that populace increasing from $1,069 to $2,201. In between this period, the amount of economic wealth has risen from $441 to $795, and the quantum of immovable wealth from $652 to $1,470.

### PEOPLE’S WEALTH TREBLED

During July and December of 2015, the earnings stood at $16.08 billion against target of $15.86 billion, marking a 7.84% rise from the corresponding period of the last fiscal year. All the major export products saw terrific growth during this period, including readymade garments (RMG) which earned $13.14 billion, marking a 9.24% growth from $12.02 billion of the same period last year. During the same period, pharmaceutical sector earned $43 million, posting a 17.22% growth; leather goods export rose by 60.68% to $176.86 million; rubber exports grew 44.65%, followed by jute yarn 32.77%, specialized textile 11%, home textile 16.68%, engineering products 25.73% and furniture 13.19%.

Readymade garments (RMG) sector accounts for Bangladesh’s largest export earnings from any sector. The year 2015 saw the garment sector log in its highest ever export earnings, facilitated in part by the enhanced trust and confidence of international buyers due to increased safety standards in factories and businesses shifting operations from China. Country’s export earnings from merchandise products registered a 6.4% growth in 2015 from the year before. The government has announced the target to achieve $50 billion from garments exports by 2021.
1.13 ECONOMIC UNITS DOUBLED

The number of economic units has doubled between 2003 and 2013 riding on the fast expanding non-farm activities across Bangladesh, according to the government’s latest census released last year. In 2003, the number of economic units was 3.7 million which swelled to 7.8 million in 2013, according to the Economic Census of 2013 that was released last year. The economic units have increased 71% since 1986, when the first economic census in the country took place. Economic units went up 62.61% to 2.3 million in the last decade, while those in the urban areas rose 71.48% to 5.5 million in 2013. Households with economic units also increased over the period from 9,00,023 in 2003 to 2.8 million in 2013. The number of female-headed households increased five times since 2003 to more than half a million in 2013. The number of permanent establishments rose 50% to 4.5 million in 2013 from 2.9 million a decade ago, showing that the base of the economy is getting stronger.
In October 2015, the government unveiled one of its most important instruments for medium term planning and implementation of development targets, the Seventh Five Year Plan 2016-2020 (‘Accelerating Growth, Empowering Citizens’). This Plan follows the successful implementation of the Sixth Five Year Plan (2010-2015) of the current government, the validity of which ended with 2015 end. Among others, the plan aims to empower people with more employment and skill development opportunities, supply credit for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) development, introduce ways to make people more productive, and emphasize social protection, urban transition and a sustainable development pathway resilient to disaster and climate change. One of the most notable targets of the plan is to create 12.9 million new jobs in the next five years.

The Plan emphasizes six issues: developing vocational knowledge-based human resource; removing infrastructural limitations in power, energy and communication sectors; fix development strategy for agrarian, and small and medium industries; enact specific strategy to boost exports from ICT, health and education sectors; bring dynamism in public-private investment, and diversify products to boost export. A panel of economists spent a year preparing the plan by collecting data on sectors and subsectors from 30 research papers and 53 ministries and departments. Coordinated by the Planning Commission’s General Economics Division, to prepare the plan various economists, sociologists, university teachers, former government officials, and development organizations were consulted.

### 7th FYP Main Targets

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<td>GDP Growth</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jobs</td>
<td>12.9 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty Rate</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme Poverty Rate</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Investment</td>
<td>$9.6 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Export Earnings</td>
<td>$54 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drainage Coverage</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity Coverage</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Coverage</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teledensity</td>
<td>100%</td>
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For poverty and extreme poverty reduction, in recent years, Bangladesh has been termed globally as ‘the land of impossible attainments’. The country has already achieved the targets meant for a hunger and poverty-free society under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The success in poverty reduction has been well-acclaimed by the international community.

In a space of a decade, the rate of poverty decreased by 18%, coming to 22.4% in 2015 from 40% in 2005. Additionally, extreme or hardcore poverty rate declined from 34.3% in 2000 to 12.6% in 2015. Under the government’s recently adopted Seventh Five Year Plan 2016-2020, the target has been set to further reduce poverty rate from 22.4% to 18.6% and extreme poverty to around 8.9% within the next five years. Such rapid decline in poverty has been possible due to the steadfast determination of Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

When the current government took office in 2009, around 50 million people of the country were poor, while 28.8 million were in the clutch of extreme poverty. In the last six years, the number of poor has been reduced to 38 million while the number of extreme poor has been reduced to 15 million. In an interview given to the Guardian UK in September 2015, HPM Sheikh Hasina commented:

“My priority is to establish this country as a poverty-free country...We have a long way to go - we have to do more. When I have been able to establish this country as a poverty-free country, a hunger-free country, a developed country, perhaps at that time, perhaps then I may say I am proud.”
2.2 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s Human Development Index 2015, Bangladesh outshone all the South Asian countries including the likes of India, showing the world a new road in translating its income into human development. Health education, social safety and new technology adoption show astonishing progress with an average annual growth of 1.64% in the last two and a half decades. Bangladesh ranked 142 out of 188 countries in the index, while neighbouring India ranked at 130, Nepal at 145 and Pakistan at 147. UNDP stated that:

"Bangladesh has shown a positive trend in Human Development for the last couple of decades with an average annual increase of about 1.55 percent."

2.3 AUGMENTED SOCIAL PROTECTION

In 2015-16, the allocation for ensuring social security was raised to $4.75 billion, that accounts for 12.72% of the entire budget, up from $185 million in 2007. Currently, as many as 145 special programmes have been put in place across the country. Till date, 2.4 million and 75,000 people have been given monthly allowances, including 900,000 widows and deserted women, and 400,000 persons with disabilities. 120,000 landless families have been distributed with 55,000 acres of agricultural land and a 40 day work programme has been initiated nationwide to provide earnings opportunities for the seasonal unemployed.

Another initiative “Employment for Ultra-Poor”, introduced by the present government, has generated an 80 day employment scheme for around 5.4 million people over the last six years. Last year, as many as 8,80,000 people received the fruition of that programme, resulting in the country witnessing the highest rise in rice equivalent wage. With a twofold increase in last six years, the value of that scale soared to 8kg last year from 5 kg in 2005.
Beneficiaries of social safety allowances are getting their allowance in their own account to maintain transparency. Stipends for maximum 780,000 students per month have been distributed under stipend project up to June 2015. 390,000 students of poor families are getting allowances for primary education under Reaching Out of School Children (ROSC) Project. 3.3 million students of poverty prone areas are served with high protein biscuits in every school day. About 28,457 acres of government land have been settled in favor of 49,559 landless families. 10,703 landless and homeless families have been rehabilitated in 254 guchchhagrams (clustered village) under ‘Guchchhagram’ project.

Total number of beneficiaries under Rural Social Service (RSS) program is 24,15,000. Under Rural Maternity Center (RMC) Program for the empowerment and economic emancipation of women 8,34,960 persons are getting benefits from 318 programs in 64 districts. 1,50,050 persons are getting benefit under rehabilitation program for the disabled and acid victims. ‘Asrayan’ is one of the eight innovative initiatives of the Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. 139,188 families have been benefited under the project so far. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has taken special initiative to sanction allowance for the destitute women. Allowance recipient of widow and deserted women was 1.12 million in 2013-14 financial year. 2.7 million citizens are receiving old age allowance. Another 400,000 persons has received allowance for the insolvent persons with disabilities and 50,000 students with disabilities received stipends in the last two years.

Aiming to bring all the poor people under a safety net by 2018, the government has formulated a new National Social Security Strategy (NSSS), which would cover every age from newborn to the elderly for their life and living. The five-year (2015-16 to 2021-22) strategy would facilitate cash allowances to women, elderly people and all physically-challenged people. It will also create work opportunities for the eligible men. 23 ministries and divisions are implementing 145 programmes relating to social security. Over the next five years, the NSSS has set a goal to “reform the national social security system by ensuring more efficient and effective use of resources, strengthen delivery systems and progress towards a more inclusive form of social security”.

The NSSS will ensure that the most vulnerable women are provided with income security, and getting opportunities to be engaged in the labour market. The strategy also focuses on ensuring employment for new mothers. Moreover, the strategy will initiate a social insurance system that would enable people to invest in their own social security, providing protection against the risks of old-age, disability, social exclusion and unemployment. During the initial years of NSSS implementation, emphasis will be given to extreme poor and the most vulnerable sections of the population. To avoid leakage and under-coverage, there will be a shift from the current discretionary approach to a targeted universal approach. The Central Monitoring Committee on Social Safety Net Programmes under the Cabinet Division will ensure inter-ministerial coordination of social security programmes.

Under a unique initiative of HPM Sheikh Hasina called “Ashrayan” which aims to give shelter to poor homeless people, to date 1,35,000 families have been given land, building materials and financial assistance. Under the “Have Land But No House” project, semi-pucca houses are being built for the poor, while homeless people are getting help for building homes under easy conditions from the housing trust. Recently, the government has approved a compact township project for rural people of seven divisions involving $54.2 million. Under the Returning Home project, poor people are being incentivized to return to rural areas from urban slums. So far, 15,924 urban slum dwelling families have been rehabilitated under the project. The rehabilitated families have so far, been provided with interest free loans worth around $950,000.

2.4 WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Bangladesh continued to be a model for empowering women in 2015, winning the Women in Parliament (WIP) Global Forum Award for women empowerment, especially in the political arena. Bangladesh is the only country in the world, where in the parliamentary government format, all three key positions, namely, Prime Minister, Speaker and Leader of the Opposition, are women.
According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2015, Bangladesh leads South Asia in reducing gender disparities with the maximum advances being made in the health sector. Bangladesh was ranked 64th in 2015, advancing four places from the ranking of 68th in the year before. Bangladesh not only further improved its ranking but also fared well in its overall score with 0.704, up from 0.697 the year before. In particular, the index shows significant progress in cutting gender disparities in the health sector, women's literacy, and women's political empowerment (in which regard Bangladesh is one of the top ten countries of the world).

Female workforce is also increasing fast. With a greater number of women getting involved in economic activities, the country's female labour force will account for more than one-third of the total workforce by 2021, according to a census of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. Female labour force increased to 5.5 million in 2011 from 2.7 million in 2001. Given the growth rate, it will be 33.5 million of the entire workforce of 82.4 million by 2021.

One Stop Crisis Center (OCC) has been established in 8 Medical Colleges including Dhaka to offer all necessary services from one place for women and child victims of violence. Destitute and physically disabled women are trained along with food assistance by selected NGO's to become self reliant. 100% beneficiaries of this project are women. 750,000 women living below poverty line have been assisted with VGD program in 2014-15 financial year.
2.5 FINANCIAL INCLUSION

Bangladesh has been a success story around the world for its various activities designed to secure financial inclusion. In December 2015, Bangladesh has won the Child and Youth Finance International (CYFI) Country Award 2015 from Asia and the Pacific region for the central bank’s mooted school banking. Launched in 2010, school banking has emerged as one of the core components of the financial inclusion programmes in Bangladesh, with nearly one million school students accommodated into the formal financial system with significant deposit size. Under the scheme, students can open bank accounts with initial deposits of less than $2 with no charges or fees applicable on such accounts. More than 9,00,000 such accounts have been opened so far with total deposits of around $88.7 million.

Innovative School Banking

Under the ‘One House One Farm’ Project of Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, which emphasizes on micro-savings as opposed to microcredit, 2.2 million rural families of 40,272 villages have been directed towards lives free from poverty. The savings fund for 2.2 million rural poor families now stands at around $294 million, of which $217.3 million have been invested for creating micro farms. The per capita income of these people has increased annually by around $140. To preserve and manage the funds of these people, the “Palli Sanchay Bank” (Rural Savings Bank) has been set up.

2.6 DISABILITY RIGHTS

Various steps have been taken for the persons with disabilities of the country under the direct supervision of HPM Sheikh Hasina. The quota for persons with disabilities in public service employment has been increased from 1% to 10%. Around 400,000 persons with disabilities are receiving monthly allowance of $5.09. Social facilities such as education are being ensured for persons with disabilities, such as introduction of free Braille books for students with visual impairments. An autism research center and a free autism school has been started in Dhaka. New laws have been enacted to prioritize disability rights and protection.
2.7 RMG SAFETY

According to an inspection carried out by the government, in association with the International Labour Organization (ILO), Canada, the Netherlands and United Kingdom, more than 80% of the 1,475 surveyed factories in Bangladesh supplying global retailers have been found to adhere to building codes, as well as fire and electrical safety standards. Among the other factories, the government has ordered 37 factories, which accounted for less than 2%, to be closed for failing to address safety issues on their premises and another 209 have been warned they would be closed if they didn't take remedial measures immediately. These assessments are a direct result of the policies and actions taken by the government to specifically address health and safety issues in Bangladesh's garment factories since mid-2013.

2.8 EQUITABLE POLICIES

**Policy on Domestic Workers:** In order to ensure protection and welfare of domestic workers, the government has formulated the Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy 2015. The policy makes provisions for, among others: minimum age for work; fair wages; decent working conditions; fixed working hours; identity cards; contract of employment; maternity leave and legal actions against physical or verbal abuse and sexual harassment. Enactment of the policy has received high praise from different stakeholders.

**Former Enclave Dwellers:** For many years, residents within India and Bangladesh used to live stateless lives in what was called enclaves. To rehabilitate the residents of former enclaves, resulting from the milestone Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) implemented in 2015, the government has undertaken a number of measures. A high-powered committee is supervising the process of work on the necessary projects for the welfare of these former enclave people. The central bank directed all locally operational scheduled banks to extend farm loans to the citizens of the 111 enclaves. Another US$24.71 million project has been rolled out to develop infrastructure in these areas and to bring the people under electricity coverage another project was undertaken worth $3.5 million. Rural cooperatives are formed to ensure over 10,000 families become financially independent. Primary schools are to be set up to educate the children while another ongoing project seeks to provide these residents with access to pure drinking water and sanitation.
3. AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

3.1 RECORD FOOD PRODUCTION

The country has exceeded all previous records in food production. Even unimaginable a few years back, Bangladesh is now exporting food after meeting demands at home. In 2015, Bangladesh exported 25,000 metric tonnes of rice to Sri Lanka. Monga (seasonal joblessness and famine) in the northern parts of Bangladesh has been eliminated under the current government’s tenure in power. Rice production has been increased to almost 35 million metric tonnes in 2015 from only 26.5 million metric tonnes in 2006. Wheat production has been increased from 0.7 million tonnes in 2006 to 1.5 million metric tonnes in 2015.

1.2 million metric tonnes of rice and 24,000 metric tonnes of wheat has been collected in 2015 from internal sources to ensure safety of food storage. Total food storage in 2015 was 1.5 million 46,939 metric tonnes. A total of 11, 27,000 thousand metric tonnes of rice and 447,000 metric tonnes of wheat have been distributed under the public food distribution program. The storage capacity of government warehouses has been raised to 19, 50,000 metric tons. Construction of a multi-storied warehouse with storage capacity of 25,000 metric tonnes has been completed in Santahar Cilo.

Average annual growth rate in the fisheries sector at present is 6.23%. About 18 million people lives on this sector. More than 3.54 million metric tonnes of fish and shrimp were produced in 2013-14 using appropriate technology. In the last two years additional 15,000 metric tons of fish was produced and 161,000 metric tonnes of fish and fish products have been exported. Bangladesh stands fourth in the world in producing inland freshwater fish. Bangladesh has also been included as the pilot country in Blue Growth Economy. In 2014-15 milk production reached to 6.9.7 million metric tonnes. In the same period, the production of meat and egg stood at 5.86 million metric tonnes and 5.2 million pieces respectively.

3.2 SUPPORT FOR FARMERS

To sustain the agricultural production, subsidy of almost $900 million was distributed among the farmers. Agricultural assistance worth $5.14 billion have been distributed in the previous six years. A project of $21.7 million has been implemented for mechanization of farms with 30% subsidy on machine parts. $1.3 million has also been distributed to supply agricultural instruments in the marsh-land areas. 64 high yielding varities of crops have been developed in the last two years that are disease resistant and can sustain against drought, flood and salinity. It is now possible to yield sate
Agriculture and Food Security

A wholesale reform is set to be initiated in the existing government feeding assistance scheme in order to make the programmes work more effectively, benefit more lives and ensure the highest level of accountability. Under the new move, the government will sell rice at a token price of only $0.19 per kg, replacing the existing no-price-tag Test Relief and Vulnerable Group Feeding programmes, while the reforms will allow the government to provide cash instead of food grain to people working in special TR projects.

Headed by the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the Cabinet has sanctioned the draft of the national nutrition policy that aims to ensure nutrition for mothers, children, adolescent girls and the poor people. The objective is to provide better nutritious food to people, particularly mothers, adolescent girls, children and the deprived and to improve the quality of lives to expedite national development. The earlier National Food and Nutrition Policy (NFNP) was formulated in 1997, during the previous Awami League government.

According to the latest Hunger and Nutrition Commitment Index, Bangladesh ranked second in South Asia to lead the table for lifting people from the clutches of hunger. The report, published for third consecutive year, puts Bangladesh in the 14th position among 45 developing countries, up from 20th...
in 2014. Furthermore, as per a new survey administrated by International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Bangladesh became a shining example in reducing child malnutrition among the developing countries, especially in the Asian region. From 59 % in 1990, the child stunting figure slid to 41% in 2011 and further reduced to 36% currently. Projecting Bangladesh as a focal country, a global initiative was launched in the United States in November to end hunger and under nutrition by 2025. Compact2025 - the programme designed by IFPRI, aims at achieving global food security and nutrition by 2025, five years ahead of 2030, the year set for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In October last, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina formally received the FAO ‘Achievement Award’ bestowed upon Bangladesh, in recognition for the landmark progresses in fighting hunger and undernourishment. The award mentioned that Bangladesh reached the MDG target to curb country's population sufferings from undernourishment by at least 50% or to bring it below 5%. A United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (UNFAO) report on global hunger, published last year, highlights Bangladesh for having cut chronic hunger by more than half since 2000. The report cites Bangladesh as one of a number of bright spots in a global effort to eradicate hunger by 2030.
Under the leadership and personal supervision of HPM Sheikh Hasina, noticeable development of country's infrastructure facilities have taken place in the last six years. Right after coming to power, the government embarked on a plan to fast track six mega infrastructure projects with an aim of reshaping the country's economic outlook, improving communication and accelerating GDP growth. She formed a high-powered Fast Track Project Monitoring Committee headed by herself to oversee the progress of these projects.

These projects are: Padma Bridge, deep-sea port in Sonadia, metro rail in Dhaka, a massive coal-fired power plant in Rampal, Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant and an LNG terminal in Maheshkhali. Subsequently, the third seaport at Paira and the Matarbari mega coal power plant were also included in the list of fast track projects. All of these mega projects, crucial for taking Bangladesh to the next level of development, are currently in various stages of implementation.

### 4.1 FAST TRACK INITIATIVES

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### 4.2 PADMA BRIDGE

The construction work of the main structure of Padma Bridge and river training has been initiated. Two service areas and construction yard has already been completed. About 31% work of the project has been completed. This is the largest ever infrastructural undertaking of Bangladesh. Worth around $3 billion, this is the largest self-financed project for Bangladesh too. At the current speed of construction, the 6.15 KM long bridge is expected to be functional by 2018. Once completed, the bridge has the potential to transform the lives of 30 million people living in the country's southwest region.

### 4.3 METRO RAIL

Preparatory work of the 20 kilometer long Metro Rail from Uttara to Bangladesh Bank costing $2.8 billion has been completed to ease traffic congestion of Dhaka city. For the 20.1 km long Elevated Metrorail System, MRT Line-6, a total of 16 stations are being constructed. There will be system for automatic fare collection and trains will arrive every 3.5 minutes in the stations. Once complete, the system will be able to carry 60,000 passengers in an hour. According to the Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA), the project work is going on fast and the construction of MRT will be complete by December in 2019.
Padma Bridge

- 31% Work Complete
- $3.6 Billion Project Cost
- 6.15 KM in Length
- 2018 Completion
- 30 Million Lives To Improve

METRO RAIL

- $2.8 Billion Project Cost
- 20.1 KM in Length
- 16 Stations
- Train every 3.5 Minutes
- 2019 Completion
- 60,000 Passengers/Hour
4.4 KARNAPHULI RIVER TUNNEL

An agreement has been signed with the government of China to make a 3.5 kilometer long tunnel under the bed of the river Karnaphuli in Chittagong. Top economic body of the government, ECNEC, gave final approval to the project in November 2015. To be built at an estimated cost of 1 billion and 78 million US dollars, the tunnel once complete in 2020, will take communication systems of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar to new heights. Earlier in June, the Road Transport and Bridges Ministry had inked a deal with Chinese firm for the construction of the tunnel. A joint technical and financial feasibility study for constructing the tunnel has already been completed.

4.5 DHAKA CHITTAGONG HIGHWAY

A deal has been signed between the government and four Japanese construction firms to construct three new bridges and a flyover, worth around $1.1 billion, on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway. The projects, receiving substantial funding from the Japanese government, would be completed by 2018. This will complement the current mega communications undertaking of upgrading the highway into a four-lane one. The government has already upgraded 184 KM out of 198 KM of Dhaka-Chittagong highway to four lane. The projects, receiving substantial funding from the Japanese government, would be completed by 2018.

4.6 BUS RAPID TRANSIT

Construction of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) would begin in March 2016 aimed at removing traffic congestion from Dhaka city. The necessary survey work in this regard was completed in December 2015. The cost of the BRT has been fixed at more than $266 million, funded jointly by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Bangladesh government. Tenders have been floated for both separate packages in the BRT. Fast-moving, high-capacity BRT buses will move between the stations in just three minutes, and is expected to be able to transport an estimated 20,000 passengers each way, every hour. Passengers will be covered by a mandatory insurance policy. Ticketing will done using smart cards and the buses will be equipped to allow level boarding, making it easier for older people, children and disabled passengers to get on and off the buses. Six overpasses, including a bridge over the Turag River, will be built under the project. The government plans to implement BRT services in six districts – Dhaka, Gazipur, Narayanganj, Manikganj and Munshiganj.

4.7 UPGRADING RAILWAY

As part of bringing in a wholesale upgrade in the railway sector, the government has rolled out the process to purchase 250 new passenger coaches and 10 engines spending more than $270 million for its fleet to make the train a low-cost, safe and quick mode of transport. Another project titled ‘Western Bangladesh Bridge Improvement Project’ was approved that involves replacing and constructing 61 small- and medium-sized bridges encompassing 4,715 metres in 24 western and south-western districts at the expense of more than $373 million.
Construction work of 61 kilometer double line with modernization of signaling system in 11 stations from Laksham to Chinki Astana has been inaugurated for the development of railway. Physical infrastructure development of 64 kilometer double line from Tongi to Bhoirob Bazar, including signaling system has already been completed. Besides process to procure 100 meter gauge and 170 broad gauge passenger coaches is underway.

4.8 PORTS

To develop the main infrastructure of Paira Deep Sea Port 6,000 acres of land has been purchased by the government. A project involving $143 million has been approved in 2015 for developing necessary infrastructures and facilities to operate the port in limited scale. Long awaited New Mooring Container Terminal in Chittagong is now in operation with container handling capacity in four terminals.

Mongla seaport will undergo a major revamp and upgrade work as the government has undertaken a $255.62 million project aiming to enable the port to deal with transit trade of the region’s landlocked countries in light of the regional connectivity deals struck recently. Starting from this year, the four year project will see construction of a container terminal, a container delivery yard, and a multi-storage car-parking yard while a feasibility study on the second shipping hub is already underway.

Construction of a deep seaport at Matarbari in Maheshkhali Island in Cox’s Bazar is set to start soon this year. A number of countries are keen to embark on this mega infrastructural undertaking. The port will have a draft of around 18 metres, which is more than double the draft available in Bangladesh’s existing ports in Chittagong and Mongla. This will allow bigger ships to offload cargo there, resulting in lower port handling expenditure and enhancing competitiveness of Bangladesh’s exports.
4.9 ROAD COMMUNICATIONS

To prevent congestion in streets, various flyovers have been built in different important streets of Dhaka, such as Mayor Mohammad Hanif Flyover, Kuril Flyover, Mirpur Airport Flyover, Tejgaon Flyover and Khilgaon Flyover. Across the nation, the government has constructed 14 major bridges, 4,507 medium and small bridges, 13,751 culverts and 21,000 Km new roads. Construction has begun in August 2015 of the Dhaka Elevated Expressway, worth $1.062 billion, a 46.73 km roads project in Dhaka aimed at easing congestion and facilitating smoother traffic. Bus services to Kolkata- Dhaka- Agartala and Dhaka-Sylhet- Shilong- Gouhati- Dhaka has been launched in 2015. Under different development projects of Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), 9,135 Km of road (Upazila, union and village level) and 43,250 meters of bridge/culvert have been constructed. LGED is operating the construction project of 8.25 kilometer long four lane “Moghbazar-Mouchak Integrated Flyover” with a stipulated cost of around $98 million to minimize traffic congestion of the capital.
5. POWER AND ENERGY

5.1 POWER

By constructing 11 new power plants, increasing power generation capacity by 1,798 megawatt (MW) and installing 42,000 km new transmission lines, 3 million more people were brought under electricity coverage in the years 2014 and 2015. Total power generation capacity of the country has reached 14,077 MW from 3,268 MW in 2009, bringing 75% people of the country under electricity coverage. The current government had outlined its vision of “Electricity for All” when it assumed power in 2014 for the second time. To that end and in line with the successes already achieved, the government now aims to generate 24,000 MW electricity by 2021. The Seventh Five Year Plan (2016-2020) targets raising power generation capacity to 23,000 MW by 2020, and increasing electricity coverage to 96% people of the country.

Between 2009 and 2015, the government has constructed 77 power plants with generation capacity of 6,306 MW that added 6,806 MW electricity to the national grid including 500 MW imported power from India during the period. Besides, the government signed agreements to construct 77 power plants with capacity of 11,408 MW both in public and private sectors, of which 52 plants with capacity of 5,287 MW joined operational activities, while the rest 25 plants having capacity of 6,082 MW are under construction. Moreover, some 22 power plants with generation capacity of 7,848 MW are under process for tender floating and six more plants with 4,685 MW capacity are underway for planning. In addition, the World Bank has approved an additional $177 million fund for the construction of a 335-megawatt combined cycle power plant at Siddhirganj, near Dhaka.
5.2 NUCLEAR ENERGY

In December, the Cabinet approved the largest power plant of Bangladesh to date, the 2,400 MW Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant. With this project, Bangladesh for the first time is entering the era of civilian nuclear technology. To be built with the technical assistance of Russian state owned Rosatom, the cost of the project is $12.65 billion, making it the single most ambitious project in the history of Bangladesh. In last May, the draft of “Nuclear Power Plant Ordinance 2015” was endorsed, giving the project a legal foothold. Under the Act, Nuclear Power Company of Bangladesh has been set up. Russia will train the country's nearly 1,600 students from Bangladesh to create the necessary pool of experts to run the plant.

The plant would use a new generation reactor that has a lifespan of 60 years with an option of extending it for 20 years. The reactor contains improved safety features, and its passive safety system is capable of working for 72 hours in case of any critical or emergency situation. As the first-phase work at the plant site is over, works are underway to build the second phase, which involves preparing the ground for building the necessary infrastructure. Given the rate of current progress, hopes are on the horizon that the first phase of the plant will go into operation from 2021.

5.3 ENERGY

At the end of 2015, daily gas production stood at 2,700 million cubic feet (cbf), up from 1,744 million cbf in 2006. Application of 3D seismic survey in unexplored fields covering a stretch of 3,096 square kilometers has led to the discovery of 6 new gas structures while 39 development wells were drilled, testing of 8 wells were completed and a new transmission line was set up that expanded to 767 km in length. Gas compressor stations were set up in different districts to add more supply to the national grid. Three drilling rigs were added to the state run exploration company to increase its efficiency and expand its capacity.

Currently, gas supply has to feed a demand of 3 million subscribers every day. Besides, full swing works are underway to find and dig 18 development and 20 exploration wells anew respectively while 11 fresh wells will undergo complete makeover. Once completed, the generation capacity will scale to 325 million cubic cm. Several blocks were leased out to international companies for onshore and offshore exploration. Moreover, steps have been initiated to conduct non-exclusive seismic survey on sea blocks.
Rural Electrification: In 2015, the Rural Electrification Board (REB) launched an unique scheme to light up the houses of people staying in the off-grid areas across the country. Initially introduced in Mushiganj district, this endeavour has resulted in providing power connections to 8,00,000 new households last year. By 2021, this programme will bring 18 million households residing in 90% off-grid areas under electricity coverage. In the last five years, the REB has installed 34,3487 km distribution lines offering electricity to 2,223 villages. A mega US$ 882.7 million project has been undertaken recently to provide electricity to 1.5 million rural homes.

Renewable Energy: Bangladesh is also showing the way in the use of renewable energy. With support of the current government’s green energy policy, a total 170 megawatt solar power is being generated in the national off grid zones currently. The country boasts the fastest growing solar technology use in Asia and it is still expanding. The growth of generating solar power every year on an average is 17%, transforming lives of the rural people and improving irrigation of farmers. By mid-2015, Bangladesh had 4 million solar home systems (SHS) and 200 solar irrigation pumps (SIP) generating power through solar panels. Total amount of renewable energy is 411 MW at present, which the government intends to raise to 2,000 MW by 2021 and 4,000 MW by 2030.

The government has started works to transform 3,00,000 to 4,00,000 diesel-run irrigation pumps into solar-pumps for saving the cost for diesel in one side and protecting environment on the other. The Rural Electrification Board (REB) has already set up 40 such pumps across the country and is working for 300 more pumps with funding from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Moreover, under a government-to-government scheme with China, works are in motion to set up 2,00,000 more such pumps soon.

An action plan was finalized by Sustainable Energy Development Authority (SREDA) for setting up 30 million improved cook-stoves by 2030. A house-hold energy platform has already been formed allowing all the institutions working on improved cook-stoves to be members of the platform. The Global Alliance for Clean Cook-Stove will extend cooperation.
Bangladesh is currently importing 500 MW power from India. Another 100 MW will be coming from the Tripura state very soon while negotiations were started for another 500 MW in future from Nepal. On top of that, the Asian Development Bank has announced to provide financial assistance to help increase transmission capacity of a cross-border electricity link between India and Bangladesh. During a visit to Bangladesh in last November, Bhutanese Economic Affairs Minister has proposed to provide Bangladesh with hydroelectricity at the cheapest rate. Commencement of physical implementation of the said projects would usher in a new era in the history of cross-border power connectivity in South Asia.

Solar Revolution in Agriculture
The first day of new academic session 2016 was marked with a high note of festivity, exuberance and celebration as around 4.4 million students of primary and secondary grades were handed over a new set of textbooks in all the schools across the country. This year, during the “Textbook Festival Day”, the biggest free text book distribution scheme in the world, the government provided 334 million copies of textbooks. The government in 2009 started distributing textbooks to students free of cost and till date has distributed 1.95 billion copies of textbooks.

Apart from the free books scheme, to encourage education, the current government has so far awarded 3 million stipends and 10 million scholarships since 2009. To prevent drop-out of the poor students, more than $112 million has been distributed among around 5 million students as stipends and free studentship in 2013 and 14. Beneficiaries of the school feeding programme has been raised to 7.8 million pupils. The government also took the bold step of abolishing all forms of corporal punishments in educational institutions. Budgetary allocation for education has been increasing year-on-year, with $4.7 billion allocated in the 2015-16 fiscal year. 14,428 public and private schools have been modernized and 1,500 schools are being constructed in villages without any schools.

1.95 Billion
Free Books Distributed Since 2009

7.8 Million
Beneficiaries of School Feeding Scheme

$4.7 Billion
Allocation for Education in 2015-16

$84 Million
New Allocation for Advanced Research

More than 13 Million Scholarships and Stipends
6.2 INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

In 2015, for the first time, Braille textbooks were distributed free of cost to students with visual impairments. 61 special needs schools have been modernized to provide education for students with various disabilities. The government has already allocated land to establish an academy for children with autism and neurodevelopmental disorders in Purbachal, Dhaka. The academy will have two different dormitories, each with a capacity to accommodate 100 such boys and girls. To encourage girls education, separate toilet facilities have been strengthened in schools around the country. Second Chance Education Programme is educating 450,000 students deprived of primary education. Initiatives have been taken to educate ethnic minority students in their native languages.

6.3 TEACHERS’ WELFARE

In order to upgrade quality of education, emphasis has been given on the teachers. Male: Female teacher ratio now stands at 36:64. 58 types of Class 1 to 5 teachers’ guides have been designed and distributed. 126,000 new teachers have been recruited. 26,000 educational institutions have been brought under monthly payment order (MPO) to ensure financial security of teachers. The monthly house rent and medical allowances for teachers have been increased. The status of assistant teacher of high schools and head teachers in primary schools has been upgraded to the second class from third class.

6.4 VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The government has made efforts to mainstream vocational and technical education. Technical education centers have been set up in 488 sub-districts, with 23 districts having poly-technical institutes. Establishment of technical schools in 100 sub-districts are currently going on. 13.11% students got the opportunity to have technical education in the fiscal year 2014-15. The government has planned at least one engineering college for every district. 68,843 technical students are receiving monthly stipends. 12 language training centers have been set up in different divisions.

6.5 HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

The biggest e-library in Asia has been set up in Dhaka University. Higher education research centers are being set up at 121 sub-districts. 4 new engineering and technology universities have been established. The government is working to improve the quality of education in private universities, to which end, a new law has already been enacted. Academic Innovation Fund is providing much needed funds for research works in public universities. Work is ongoing to build a countrywide network among university students and teachers. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has announced that every district in the country will have at least one public or private university.

Giving a major boost to the nation’s march towards the fulfillment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the government sanctioned an allocation worth around $84 million to four ministries for facilitating research work in order to enhance the country’s socio-economic status by 2030.
6.7 EDUCATIONAL SUCCESSES

Drop-out rate has been reduced to 19.4%. Gender parity has been achieved in primary and secondary education. 100% enrollment has been achieved in primary schools. Literacy rate has been raised to 71% in 2015, which was only 45% in 2006. 20 million children enrolled in primary schools in the last seven years.
7. HEALTH AND SANITATION

7.1 HEALTHIER THAN EVER BEFORE

The prospect of Bangladesh health sector is being reflected in the various globally accepted indicators. Average life expectancy of the people of Bangladesh has reached 71 years in 2015, which was 66.5 years only a few years back. Under-5 child mortality has been reduced to 41 per thousand live births, down from 47 in 2011. Maternal mortality has also come down to 170 in per 100 thousand cases, decreasing from 228 per thousand live births in 2011. Infant mortality rate has been reduced from 92 per 1000 live births in 1990-91 to 35. Proportion of children immunized against measles increased from 54% in 1990-91 to 87.5% by 2015.

Significant progress has been achieved in the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel, which has increased from 5% in 1990-91 to 31.7% in 2015. Planned parenthood has been encouraged, resulting in the contraceptive prevalence rate increasing from 39.7% in 1990-91 to 61.2%. Prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Bangladesh is less than 0.1%, well below epidemic level. Prevalence of malaria came down from 776.9 per 100,000 population in 2008 to 270.84 in 2015. Deaths from malaria per 100,000 population has been brought down from 1.4 in 2008 to 0.101. Prevalence of tuberculosis per 100,000 population has been brought down from 493 in 1990-91 to 411, while death from TB has decreased per 100,000 population from 58 to 43.

Childhood injuries, especially drowning, have emerged as a considerable public health problem responsible for a full quarter of the deaths among children from one to four years of age. Government has already undertaken a major programme to offer free swimming lessons to school children in this regard. All schools have been directed to use local swimming pools and ponds for this purpose. Bangladesh has also formally received the certificate of being a polio-free country in 2014 by the WHO.
7.2 FACTORS BEHIND SUCCESSES

The government formulated relevant policies like the National Health Policy 2011 and the National Population Policy 2012. Curricular activity in 12 medical colleges including 5 army medical colleges has started. 12,500 doctors and 13,000 health workers have been appointed. Additional 10,000 nurses would be appointed soon. Some 100,000 poor people are getting health-card facilities. 11 new medical colleges have been inaugurated. Beds in 40 hospitals have been increased. A project to build Burn and Plastic Surgery Institute in Dhaka has been approved. Recruitment of 6,300 doctors is completed and they have been posted in sub-districts. 24 hours mobile health service is available in 16263 mibile hotline number. 16,500 community clinics are distributing 30 types of free medicines. 13,839 trained healthcare providers have provided 400 million health services in the last seven years in these clinics.

Major Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Under-5 Mortality Reduced to</th>
<th>Maternal Mortality Decreased to</th>
<th>Contraceptive Prevalence Rate Grew to</th>
<th>98.2% People Accessing Safe Water Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41/1,000 Live Births</td>
<td>170/100,000 Cases</td>
<td>61.2%</td>
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</table>

7.3 UNIVERSAL SANITATION COVERAGE

Attaining the status of a role model for its neighbours, Bangladesh has become an open defecation free country, having increased its sanitation coverage from 34% to 99% in the last decade. In the last 2 years, Department of Public Health Engineering has installed 318 service tube wells, 34 water treatment plants, 19 raised water reservoirs, 743 kilometer pipeline of different width and 8,403 sanitary latrines and 190 community latrine- public toilets through various projects. Currently, more than 98.2% of the population of Bangladesh are using improved drinking water sources.
8. CLIMATE CHANGE

8.1 RECOGNITION

Bangladesh has played a leading role in the recent years as regards international discussions and negotiations on how to tackle the adverse impacts of climate change. The country is also one of the most vulnerable to such adverse effects. Climate change in the form of extreme-weather events, tidal surges, and erratic rainfall has already started to negatively impact agricultural production, industrial development and social structures. In order to face this challenge, the current government under the leadership of HPM Sheikh Hasina has formulated a number of policies and taken a number of steps, which have already garnered significant international praise. In 2015, HPM Sheikh Hasina won the Champion of the Earth, the highest environmental accolade of the United Nations, for her decisive role in climate change matters.

- **2011:** Constitution Amended to Protect Environment
- **8 New Laws:** Enacted to Preserve Forestlands
- **120 Million:** Plant Saplings Distributed Annually
- **17.08%:** Forest Coverage
- **$385 Million:** Allocated to Climate Change Trust Fund
- **6-7% Annual Budget:** For Adaptation
8.2 ADOPTION AND RESILIENCE

In 2011, the government amended the constitution to protect and improve the environment and preserve and safeguard natural resources, biodiversity, wetlands, forests and wildlife for present and future citizens. In line with this policy, at least eight new laws were enacted or amended since 2009 to preserve forestlands in the country. Forest coverage rose to 17.08% in 2014-15 from a mere 7-8% in 2005-06, thanks to the introduction of initiatives such as the Social Afforestation Programme, which ensures people's participation in planting and raising trees in every available space, both urban and rural. Currently, more than 120 million saplings are raised and distributed every year among the people, compared to 40 million in 2001-2006.

Bangladesh was the first developing nation to create a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. From 2009-2010 to 2014-15, the government allocated US$ 385 million to the climate-change trust fund. The current government earmarks 6-7% of its annual budget on climate change adaptation. All such activities have been targeted towards adaptation to environmental changes with a view to protecting human lives from floods and hurricanes, and protecting the environment from pollution caused by rapid urbanization and unsustainable industrialization.

About four million solar-home systems have been installed in off-grid areas and 1.5 million improved cook stoves to decrease indoor air pollution as part of the green and clean energy movement across the country. Bangladesh has created the Coastal Greenbelt Project to protect the southern part of Bangladesh, which is surrounded by the Bay of Bengal, from cyclones. Dense forest covers along the coastline, particularly mangroves, form an effective buffer. By boosting this cover, death toll has been reduced to about 200 from the hurricanes Aila in 2009 and Mahasen in 2013 combined, compared to 140,000 in a single cyclone in 1991.
9. DIGITAL BANGLADESH

9.1 EMERGING IT HUB

In 2009, the vision “Digital Bangladesh” was announced by the current government, which aims to transform Bangladesh into a technologically advanced country by the year 2021. A lot has achieved in this regard already as the dream of a Digital Bangladesh is quickly becoming a distinct reality. The country last year earned $400 million from the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector. According to AT Kearney, the world’s leading management consulting firm, Bangladesh has moved four places up in Global Service Location Index (GSLI) 2015, due to significant gains in IT outsourcing, business processing outsourcing (BPO) and back office jobs. The country secured 22nd position in 2015 from 26th a year before when it debuted on the index.

9.2 DIGITAL CENTERS

A total of 5,275 digital centers have been established throughout the country where more than 200 types of digital services are being offered to public. These centers are also nurturing local entrepreneurship, and each such entrepreneur of this sector is earning $255 to $1273 a month. These centers have provided employment to 12,000 youths and resulted in earnings for entrepreneurs worth around $18 million. The work for transforming 8,000 post offices into digital centers across the country is on progress.

9.3 DIGITIZING GOVERNMENT

The world’s largest portal of 25,000 websites namely “Bangladesh National Portal” has been introduced, which won the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) award for the second consecutive year in May, 2015. The National Web Portal project secured the award under “Access to Information and Knowledge” category. The portal is the largest national web portal in the world connecting 25,000 websites comprising the offices of ministries, departments, directorates, divisions, districts, sub-districts and unions etc. and reducing the digital divide between the rural and urban and creating a multiplier effect to ensure the rights of information to the public.

25,000 tablet PCs have been distributed to public officials around the country. Internet connections
have been installed in 18,300 government offices. 8,000 strategically important public offices in district and sub-district levels have been fitted with video conferencing facilities. In order to make services available to the public, the ICT Division has developed 600 mobile applications, which are now benefiting citizens.

9.4 FIRST SATELLITE

The country has embarked on its quest to enter the space age, with works on the first satellite “Bangabandhu-1” already commenced. The government in November, 2015 signed a $248-million deal with the French company Thales Alenia to design, build and launch the commercial and broadcast satellite. The company has already started work on the design of the satellite, aiming to finish the primary job within March 2016. Once complete, the satellite would save the country $14 million a year from renting transponders of foreign satellites. With its planned launch in December 16, 2017, Bangladesh will become the 57th member of the exclusive club of satellite-owning countries. Bangladesh bought a satellite orbital slot from Russian company Intersputnik International for $28 million earlier in 2015.
Under the ICT Division’s “Learning and Earning Development Project”, which aims to create an ICT skilled workforce, “Basic ICT Literacy” training has been given to 55,000 freelancers, including 20,000 women. Under the “Leveraging ICT for Growth, Employment and Governance” project, efforts are underway to train 34,000 IT professionals. Under the “Fast Track Future Leader”, 261 budding IT entrepreneurs have already been trained, with many more to come in coming days. 10,000 students of 15 universities are being provided IT Top Up Training, while 20,000 others are being imparted Foundation Training. Moreover, in order to establish e-governance, 3,000 public officials are also being trained.

9.5 Mobile and Internet Users

The number of mobile phone users is now over 130 million and the number of internet users is 50.7 million. Free internet services are being offered at the public universities through installing wifi. Bangladesh is now ahead of India and Pakistan in terms of internet use. The 3G service has already been introduced, and the 4G service would also be launched by this year. In order to establish regional network between Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Bhutan, the country has already installed 58 KM fiber optic cable between Panchagarh and Banglabandha. Under a certain project under the Prime Minister’s Office, work has started to install optical fiber network in 1,200 unions of the country. Additionally, the “Establishing Digital Connectivity Project” is ongoing to extend optical fiber network to 2,250 unions.

9.6 Hi-Tech Parks and Data Center

Two hi-tech parks, one in Kaliakoir under Gazipur district and another one in Jessore have been set up. The first such park, the one in Kaliakoir, is being set up over 232 acres of land. The appointed developers have already started work in various blocks of the park. The process for establishing silicon cities at the divisional headquarters are also going on. 12 IT Parks are earmarked to be developed in 5 divisions and 7 districts in phases. A software technology park was launched in Karwan Bazar, Dhaka in 2015, which houses 17 IT companies in its 12 storied premises.

To retain government data in electronic format, a Tier-3 data center has been set up. A disaster recovery center has been established in Jessore’s software technology park. Additionally, with the assistance of the Chinese government, a Tier-4 standard data center is being set up at at the Kaliakoir Hi-Tech Park in Gazipur.

9.7 Skills Training

Under the ICT Division’s “Learning and Earning Development Project”, which aims to create an ICT skilled workforce, “Basic ICT Literacy” training has been given to 55,000 freelancers, including 20,000 women. Under the “Leveraging ICT for Growth, Employment and Governance” project, efforts are underway to train 34,000 IT professionals. Under the “Fast Track Future Leader”, 261 budding IT entrepreneurs have already been trained, with many more to come in coming days. 10,000 students of 15 universities are being provided IT Top Up Training, while 20,000 others are being imparted Foundation Training. Moreover, in order to establish e-governance, 3,000 public officials are also being trained.

9.8 Laws, Policies and Strategies

In order to make Digital Bangladesh a reality, the government has formulated the “Information and Communications Technology Policy 2015”, the Cyber Security Strategy Guideline 2014, and the Information Security Policy Guidelines 2014. Enactment of the National E-Services Act is under process, while work on the Digital Security Act is almost complete.
### Digital Bangladesh

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Export earnings from ICT sector in 2015</td>
<td>$400 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Place in AT Kearney’s GSLI 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Digital centers set up countrywide in 7 years</td>
<td>5,275</td>
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<td>Post offices to turn into digital centers by 2018</td>
<td>8,000</td>
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<td>First satellite in space by 2017</td>
<td>$248 million</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>Government websites in National Web Portal</td>
<td>25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government offices with internet</td>
<td>18,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offices with video conferencing</td>
<td>8,000</td>
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<td>Mobile apps providing services to citizens</td>
<td>600</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet users launching in 2016</td>
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<td>Mobile users</td>
<td>130 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hi-Tech parks being set up</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>People trained or to be trained in IT by Govt</td>
<td>122,261</td>
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