

Sheikh Hasina: The Visionary Leadership and The Development Trajectories of Bangladesh

Md. Rabiul Islam
Lecturer of History
Govt. Carmichael College, Rangpur
Mobile no. 01711-221770
Corresponding email: nirob2490@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is now a role model for statesmen of the world. Especially Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is being admired more by the world as a global leader. As a visionary statesman, Sheikh Hasina helped transform Bangladesh from an underdeveloped country to a developing country and is working hard to formulate and implement future long-term development plans to make Bangladesh a developed country. As a result, it is not an exaggeration to say that he is a developer and a great planner. Her vision and mission of governing the country is now the subject of global discussion. This article provides a brief overview of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visionary leadership in formulating and implementing multifaceted development plans.

Keywords: Sheikh Hasina, versatile Leader, Bangladesh, Prime Minister, Awami League.

Introduction

Sheikh Hasina, the most dynamic and versatile political leader and policy maker of Bangladesh, has set a series of long-term goals for the country to ensure more prosperity alongside some short-term strategies like the five-year plans. One of her master plans for the people of Bangladesh is the Vision 2041, continuation of the construction of Digital Bangladesh, that seeks to take the nation to the development highway dreamt by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. It was introduced first in 2020 to be undertaken between 2022 and 2041. Through the extraordinary social, economic management and strong political leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh is now achieving 7% average GDP (gross domestic product) growth, crossing the international standard line of the Lower Middle-Income threshold in 2015. The country has also met all the benchmarks for LDC graduation. Encouraged by these successes, under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina, the government has declared several plans to enrich and shape the future. Back in 1973, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman introduced the country's first five-year development plan or FYP. Basically, five-year plans were a Soviet concept which later proved very efficient to enlarge and boost the economy. Later, many states around the world adapted this sort of action. With pure passion, organising skills and winsome mentality, Bangabandhu decided to adapt five-year plans with some modification for his country. Meanwhile, in July 2005, the government adopted the PRSP on the advice of donors, with the goal of completing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. The 8th five-year plan for Bangladesh, approved by the National Economic Council (NEC) in December 2020 under the direction of

PM Sheikh Hasina, has goals of achieving 8.51% GDP growth and lowering the poverty rate to 15.6% by the end of this period.

Sheikh Hasina: The Visionary Leadership

Although she was born in the house of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, a veteran politician and shaper of the Bangladesh state, Sheikh Hasina's life was not smooth . Born on September 28, 1947 in a middle-class family at Tungipara in Patgati Union of Gopalganj subdivision, he grew up in the mud of the village . At the time of Sheikh Hasina's birth, her father was busy suppressing Hindu-Muslim riots in Calcutta in the company of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, ending the newly independent Pakistan movement. His political addiction is in his blood. So politics takes precedence over family . As a child, Sheikh Hasina grew up in the care and companionship of her housewife mother and grandparents. Father spent most of his time in jail. When Bangabandhu became a minister in the United Front government after 1954, his wife Fazilatun Necha Mujib moved to Dhaka with their two children Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Kamal . Children are admitted to school. But when the United Front government fell within a year, Sheikh Mujib was arrested and sent to jail. Begum Mujib lives in a rented house and takes care of her children. That is to say, Bangabandhu's children grew up in a political environment, suffering from their childhood. Although mother Fazilatun Nesha performed the main responsibility of bringing up and educating her children as a housewife, she became her husband's supporter and advisor in his agitation and politics . Bangabandhu along with Sheikh Mujib and his family members actively participated in the six-point movement of 1966, the mass movement of 1969 and the freedom struggle of Bangladesh in 1971 .

After the declaration of independence on March 26, 1971, Bangabandhu was arrested by the Pakistani military junta and taken first to Lyallpur (now Faisalabad) in Punjab and later to Mianwali Jail . Begum Mujib was kept in a house on Road No. 18 in Dhanmondi along with her two daughters Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana and her younger son Sheikh Russell . is Two sons Sheikh Kamal and Sheikh Jamal went to India and participated in the liberation war. Begum Mujib spends her time amid great uncertainty and anxiety with her husband imprisoned in Pakistan, two sons in the liberation war, elder daughter Sheikh Hasina and two other children. Sheikh Hasina's son Sajib Wazed Joy was born in July 1971 .

After the victory in the War of Liberation, Bangabandhu returned to the country on January 10, 1972 and assumed office as the head of government on January 12. Bangabandhu was on August 15, 1975 when a group of ambitious conspirators led by the traitor Khandaker Moshtaq was trying to rebuild a war-torn and helpless country on a stable, progressive path. The whole nation and the whole world was shocked and saddened by this unexpected and scandalous incident. Bangabandhu's daughter Sheikh Hasina's husband, nuclear scientist Dr. Wazed Mia, was engaged in postdoctoral research at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology in Germany in 1975 . 15 days ago, on July 30, Sheikh Hasina along with her two children and younger sister Sheikh Rehana visited her husband's workplace in Karlsruhe . Under the supervision of the Bangladeshi ambassador to West Germany, Humayun Rashid Chowdhury, they went on a trip to Amsterdam, Brussels and Paris. Ambassador Sanaul Haque requested Humayun Rashid Chowdhury to take back Bangabandhu's two daughters and their family members to the forests of Germany. Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana lost their parents, brothers and close

relatives and were overwhelmed with grief and panic. Ambassador With the help of Humayun Rashid Chowdhury and the then Indian ambassador to West Germany, they got political asylum in India and left Frankfurt on August 24 and reached New Delhi on August 25 .

Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi welcomed the children of Bangabandhu's daughter and Sheikh Hasina's husband and allotted a flat for them to stay. Later, Dr. Wazed Mia was given a job at the nuclear power plant in Delhi. Sheikh Hasina kept her identity hidden and lived a miserable life in Delhi. After a few years Sheikh Rehana moved to a relative's house (cousin) in London. There she got married to Dhaka University teacher Shafiq Ahmed Siddique. After the brutal assassination of Bangabandhu, Awami League survived with the risk of various setbacks, disunity and division. Awami League needs a popular and acceptable leader to restore and sustain its unity. Awami League leaders interacted with Sheikh Hasina in Delhi . With her consent, the Awami League leaders unanimously nominated Sheikh Hasina for the post of party president in the council session of February 1981 .

When Sheikh Hasina returned to the country on May 17, 1981, it was as if the countrymen, including the Awami League leaders and workers, had returned to Bangabandhu . Sheikh Hasina said in a tearful voice while giving a speech to the people of Manik Mia Avenue, "I have no one, I am a proletariat." I want to find all my lost parents, brothers and relatives among you. I promised you that I will sacrifice my life for the restoration of democracy in this country. Besides restructuring the party, he continued the struggle to restore democracy under the regime of dictator General Hussain Muhammad Ershad. He participated in the 1986 elections with the aim of establishing democracy. But General Ershad snatched the inevitable victory of Awami League by stealing votes. He jumped into the anti-Ershad movement along with other political parties from the opposition party. Finally, the dictator Ershad fell in December 1990 in the face of intense mass protests.

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Commission on his very first day in office as Prime Minister and pledged to commence the creation of the first five-year plan. Unfortunately, his dreams were stopped by the brutality of 15 August 1975 .

In 1996, Bangabandhu's daughter Sheikh Hasina came to power after an overwhelming victory, giving her the opportunity to establish a truly democratic government after 21 years and also to fulfil her father's unfinished dreams . With the capable and visionary leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangabandhu's legacy is being carried forward, paving the way for the realisation of his long-cherished dream of Sonar Bangla or the ultimate affluence of the nation . Incorporating her own vision for development and the dream of the father of the nation, Sheikh Hasina proposed an outline called Vision 2021 in 2001 . The main goal of the vision was to make Bangladesh a middle-income nation by 2021, three years ahead of the World Bank's deadline. In fact, she is also a visionary leader like Bangabandhu. She commenced to carry out her father's vision of transforming Bangladesh into the Switzerland of Asia.

Bangabandhu's murder case was filed at Dhanmondi police station on October 2, 1996 during Sheikh Hasina's regime in 1996-2001 . On November 12th of the same year, when the Indemnity Ordinance was repealed in Parliament, the way for the trial of the murder of Bangabandhu and the murder of four national leaders was smoothed. A 30-year water sharing agreement was signed with India on December 12, 1996 to get a fair share of the Ganges water . Historic Hill Peace Agreement was signed on December 2, 1997 in discussion with Chittagong Hill Tracts People's Association President Santu Larma to establish permanent peace in Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the Yamuna Bridge in 1998 after completing the construction work . After completing the preliminary feasibility study for the construction of a bridge on the Padma River, a decision was taken to construct the bridge on the Mawa-Jazira section of the Padma River and he laid the foundation stone of the bridge on 4 July 2001 at the Mawa end towards the end of his prime ministerial tenure. Sheikh Hasina returned to the role of leader of the opposition when the BNP won again in the 2001 national elections and formed the government. On August 21, 2004, Sheikh Hasina was attacked with a grenade . Many people including Ivy Rahman lost their lives in this attack. Fortunately, Sheikh Hasina survived . In December 2008, Awami League won the elections held under the caretaker government supported by the army, and in January 2009, he again took over the duties of the Prime Minister .

After becoming the Prime Minister for the second time, she is seen as more mature than before, experienced and skilled in government work and a determined leader who is steadfast in achieving her goals. He trusts and depends on government bureaucracy. Evaluates behavior and competence with government officials. The Prime Minister identified the Padma Bridge construction project as the highest priority project and ordered the project to be taken forward quickly . Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced the decision to build the Padma Bridge with her own funding in January 2013, when the World Bank and other development agencies withdrew from the Padma Bridge project, alleging a conspiracy of corruption . This single decision of Sheikh Hasina established her as a bold, uncompromising and confident statesman all over the world. Before the 2008 elections, Sheikh Hasina announced 'Rupkalp-2021' as an election promise . But before 2021, he transformed the country from the least

developed country Qatar to a developing middle income country. In the meantime, Sheikh Hasina won the national elections of December 2014 and 2018 and won the honor of becoming the Prime Minister for the third and fourth term respectively.

During the regime of Sheikh Hasina, the work of building Bangabandhu's dream of Sonar Bengal progressed rapidly. The country achieved self-sufficiency in food due to the massive increase in agricultural production. Where earlier food production was one crore tonnes, now food production stands at four crore tonnes. The country's GDP growth has averaged around 6.5 percent for a decade and peaked at 8.15 percent in 2019. In 2020, the per capita income of the country surpassed neighboring countries India and Pakistan. In 1972, the country's GDP was 8 billion US dollars, in 2022, the total GDP exceeded 450 billion US dollars. While the poverty rate was 40 percent in 2005, it has reduced to 20.5 percent in 2019. Currently, the extreme poverty rate is below 6 percent. After independence in 1972 the average life expectancy was below 50 years. As a result of improvements in the health system and quality of life, the average life expectancy has gradually increased to 73.4 years.

Not only has the average life expectancy increased, infant and maternal mortality rates have decreased, the population growth rate has decreased from 2.7 percent in 1973 to 1.2 percent in 2022. Currently, the primary school enrollment rate is 99 percent. Education rate increased from 51.7% in 2011 to 74.66% in 2022. Electricity supply in 2009 was 4,200 MW. In less than 14 years, 15 thousand megawatt electricity demand is being met in the country. In 2022, the power capacity has increased to about 22,500 MW. Bangladesh has achieved incredible success in the field of ICT. The number of mobile phone usage is around 17 crores. About 13 crore people use the internet. The launch of Bangabandhu-1 satellite has eased the provision of internet services. Bangladesh earns \$1 billion a year by exporting ICT services.

There is a lot of domestic and foreign investment in the economic zones and ICT parks under construction and ongoing in the country. At present 10-12 mega projects are running in the country. The inauguration of Padma Setu, the largest mega project in the country in June 2022, has led to revolutionary progress in communication development. Dhaka Metrorail and Elevated Expressway have partially opened. Karnaphuli tunnel will be commissioned by the end of this year. Rooppur nuclear power plant, Matarbari deep sea port and Matarbari power plant, Rampal power plant and several other large power plants and other mega projects will be added to the country's infrastructural progress if they are completed in the next two to three years. The willingness and courage of the Prime Minister in accepting and implementing the project is commendable.

Bangladesh has been praised around the world for sheltering the 1.2 million Rohingya people expelled and displaced from Myanmar and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been awarded the title of 'Mother of Humanity'. In his speech at various international forums including the United Nations, the Prime Minister urged the world leaders to take initiatives and steps to send the Rohingyas back to their countries peacefully. Bangabandhu's daughter Sheikh Hasina also followed the motto of 'friendship with all and enmity with none' foreign policy formulated by Bangabandhu. That's why Bangladesh maintains good relations with all the weak and strong countries without joining any alliance. We have bilateral diplomatic and commercial relations with all countries including neighboring countries. As a result of being in power for a long time, Sheikh Hasina's proposals on climate change, financing and distribution of resources to deal with crises, taking measures to stop war, refugee repatriation and energy

security etc. are being appreciated in multilateral global forums including the United Nations

According to the United Nations Development Policy Committee, Bangladesh was upgraded from a low-income country to a middle-income country in 2018. The country has to maintain its current status in several sectors till 2024 to permanently attain the middle-income status. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the country is cruising toward the right direction. The nation is now a development role model across the world. The economy that once was labelled as a "bottomless basket with no hope of survival" after the liberation war has now been globally perceived as a "development miracle". With the citation of PricewaterhouseCoopers, World Economic Forum predicted in 2017 that Bangladesh's economy will be worth \$3 trillion in 2050. In October 2018, Forum 2041 was created to study, review and implement the steps taken by Bangabandhu and his dreams in various sectors of the country to build a prosperous and developed Bangladesh by 2041. The total work was under the supervision of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Development Trajectories of Bangladesh

The government launched 'Making Vision 2041 a Reality, Perspective Plan of Bangladesh 2021-2041' containing strategies, short and long-term plans, policies, challenges, programmes and development plans to achieve some specific goals by 2041. The goals include eliminating extreme poverty and reaching Upper Middle-Income Country (UMIC) status by 2031, and High-Income Country (HIC) status by 2041. The goals will reach the ultimate point by 2041 after going through different stages. The per capita income of Bangladesh in 1987 was half that of Pakistan, and in 2007 it was two-thirds that of India. However, Bangladesh has surpassed both India and Pakistan in 2020 in this regard. Bangladesh tells the world a remarkable story of poverty reduction and development – the World Bank observed during Bangladesh's golden jubilee in 2021.

The two major initiatives of Sheikh Hasina's government, Vision 2021 and Vision 2041, have helped the nation make commendable progress over the past ten years. The development of Bangladesh is not a miracle. It has been achieved through the struggle of the ordinary people and the efficient leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Achieving self-sufficiency in food, transition from the status of less developed country, providing electricity to every household - all these have become possible due to the implementation of the development strategy Vision 2021 by confronting all domestic and foreign conspiracies under the strong and steadfast policy-leadership of the Prime Minister. Vision 2041 has been formulated as a continuation of the success of Vision 2021. The National Economist Council (NEC) meeting in February 2021 approved 'Making Vision 2041 a Reality: Perspective Plan of Bangladesh 2021-2041'.

Vision 2041 is based on two main objectives. First, Bangladesh will be a developed country by 2041, with a per capita income of more than \$12,500 with full compatibility with the digital world. Second, the country will be 'a Golden Bangla, where poverty will be a thing of the distant past'.

Vision 2041 also has collaborations and is integrated with other short- and long-term plans. Our Delta Plan 2100, an 82-year sustainable development plan, focuses on efficient use and preservation of water. Making Bangladesh a country that is environmentally sustainable is a common objective of both the Delta Plan and the Perspective Plan 2041.

The Father of the Nation's cherished dream of 'building a prosperous Bangladesh free from poverty, hunger, corruption and exploitation' has been conceived as the 'encouraging start' of Vision 2041 .

A simple example can illustrate the connection between Bangabandhu's vision and modern development plans. The Home for the homeless programme in Bangladesh was started by the Father of the Nation. On 20 February, 1972, he visited Lakshmipur district and directed the rehabilitation of the landless, homeless and helpless people there.

In response to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's slogan that 'no one will be homeless in Mujib Year', the housing programme has taken the form of a social movement .

The 'Sheikh Hasina Model of Inclusive Development' is being implemented through the shelter project, with the intention of changing the quality of life of about 2.5 crore people living below the extreme poverty line. The sole purpose of inclusive development is to improve the quality of life of a large section of the population by connecting them to productive employment.

Controversies

The Padma Bridge graft scandal was a political incident in Bangladesh that involved the ruling Awami League government that allegedly sought, in exchange for the awarding of the construction contract, a large amount of money from the Canadian construction company SNC-Lavalin. The allegations were subsequently found to be false and without merit, and a Canadian court subsequently dismissed the case .

As a result of the allegations, The World Bank pulled out of a project to provide funding for the Padma Bridge, citing corruption concerns, cancelling ₹10241.346 crore (US\$950 million) of credit for the 6 km-long (four miles) road-rail bridge over the Padma River . One of the individuals implicated was Minister of Communications Syed Abul Hossain who subsequently resigned and was later acquitted of any wrongdoing . On 11 July 2012, BNP General-Secretary Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said the Awami League government should make public a letter sent by the World Bank, wherein the Bank brought graft charges against Hasina and three other figures . On 17 January 2016, Hasina stated that a managing director of a bank in the United States provoked the World Bank to cancel the loan . The bridge was eventually constructed with the government's own funds and was inaugurated in June 2022 at a cost of ₹30,193.39 crore (US\$3.6 billion) , much higher than the original projected cost of ₹10161.75 crore (US\$950 million) .

On 24 January 2017, in a speech in parliament, Prime Minister Hasina blamed Muhammad Yunus for the World Bank's pulling out of the project.[161] According to her, Yunus lobbied with the former United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to persuade the World Bank to terminate the loan . On 10 February 2017, a justice of the Superior Court of Ontario dismissed the bribery-conspiracy case for lack of any evidence .

In 2018, Hasina's government passed the controversial Digital Security Act, 2018, under which any criticism deemed inappropriate by the government over the internet or any other media could be punished by prison terms of various degrees. This was heavily criticised both

domestically and internationally for suppressing people's freedom of speech, as well as undermining press freedom in Bangladesh .

In December 2022, the Hasina government ordered the closure of 191 websites accused of publishing "anti-state news" citing intelligence reports. Dhaka district authorities ordered the closure of Dainik Dinkal, which is owned by Tarique Rahman of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Dainik Dinkal appealed the order to the Bangladesh Press Council who dismissed their appeal in February 2022, resulting in its closure . The move has been criticised by government opponents who claim the move is an attempt to stifle opposition to the government . The government claimed Dainik Dinkal violated articles 10, 11, 16, 21(1) (kha) of the Printing Presses and Publications (Declaration and Registration) Act, 1973 as it had irregular publication and its publisher was a convicted felon .

Growth and equity are two most paramount constituents for sustainable development of any country. Another vital point is that the rapid growth must be balanced with an emphasis on equal distribution to ensure benefits for the total population, especially the poor and the vulnerable parts of the population.

Harmonising this interdependent relation between growth and equity, Sheikh Hasina has prepared Vision 2041 for the accomplishment of that dream, and a 20-year perspective plan to attain a pro-people, pro-planet, peaceful and sustainable Bangladesh where no one is left behind .

Vision 2041 provides the roadmap for accelerated growth and lays down broad approaches for eradication of poverty, inequality, and human deprivation. In the past decade, we have had remarkable success when it comes to socio-economic development under the policy of the daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The dream of Bangabandhu's Sonar Bangla is no longer a myth. Hopefully, by implementing the Vision 2041, Bangladesh will be a peaceful, prosperous, happy and developed nation, comparable with the developed world .

We firmly believe that with Sheikh Hasina's strong leadership, proper planning and dedicated efforts of all the people of the country, Bangladesh will move forward to the peak of development.

Conclusion

In the face of increasing global challenges, exemplified by climate change, Sheikh Hasina has positioned Bangladesh as a forerunner in environmental custodianship. The Prime Minister's commitment to sustainable development manifests in her diligent efforts to solve climate change and its repercussions. Bangladesh's participation in international forums advocating for environmental protection is emblematic of Sheikh Hasina's unwavering dedication to securing a healthy and sustainable future for the planet. Under Sheikh Hasina's congruous leadership, Bangladesh has fortified its standing in the global arena. The Prime Minister's diplomatic efforts have engendered robust ties with neighboring nations like India and Myanmar, elevating Bangladesh's standing on the world stage. Her instrumental role in facilitating longstanding issues with India, including the Land Boundary Agreement and water-sharing, has not only burnished bilateral relations but has also set a precedent for the amicable resolution of protracted disputes. Sheikh Hasina- led government's initiatives have explored our blue economy with the conquest of the sea about 1,31, 096 square kilometers

of maritime boundary of Bangladesh. She also resolved a land boundary with India of 16,751 acres with 111 enclaves. Sheikh Hasina did not let the army be involved in a war against Myanmar, though this country violated international laws by pushing more than a million Rohingya Refugees. Even Sheikh Hasina's approach to humanitarian causes, exemplified by the assistance of Rohingya refugees, has showcased Bangladesh's generosity and commitment to global solidarity. Her adept navigation of intricate geopolitical landscapes with diplomacy and delicacy has garnered her admiration and respect on the international stage. In the intricate tapestry of global leadership, Sheikh Hasina's tenure as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh radiates great brilliance. Her visionary approach to economic development, unwavering commitment to social welfare, environmental custodianship, and adept diplomacy have metamorphosed Bangladesh and cherished her among the world's most illustrious leaders. As the nation traverses the trajectory of progress and affluence, Sheikh Hasina remains a badge of optimism, grit, and visionary leadership for Bangladesh and the broader international community.

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