

BANGLADESH VISION 2021

Bangladesh is going to celebrate her fifty years of independence in the year 2021. Each of us would like to hope that by that time Bangladesh will have transformed itself into a country of proud people which has been successful in addressing the aspirations of a nation that emerged through a glorious war of independence. We have only fifteen years to realise these aspirations.

The objective of preparing *Bangladesh Vision 2021* is to try to present a framework of a future Bangladesh that reflects the hopes and aspirations of the citizens of the country for an economically inclusive and politically accountable society. The Vision proposes a set of concrete measures to achieve eight identified goals, by 2021, through implementation of a number of short- and medium-term initiatives and interventions.

The eight identified goals emerged from a one-year long activism of Bangladesh civil society which was kicked off through a dialogue titled "National Election 2007: Civil Society Initiative for Accountable Development" that was organised by CPD on 20 March 2006 in Dhaka. A citizen's group, *Nagorik Committee 2006*, was constituted at this dialogue which was entrusted with the task of preparing a vision document for Bangladesh. The goals were to be identified through a process of wide ranging consultations and dialogues. To get the process rolling, CPD partnered with *The Daily Star*, *Prothom Alo* and *Channel-i*. To seek inputs for the vision from citizens of the country CPD organised 15 regional dialogues in 2006 that were held across the country where a large number of stakeholders took part. Eight expert group meetings were also organised at CPD's initiative to seek inputs from subject specialists. The draft vision document was posted on the website to enable citizens to come up with comments, views and suggestions.

The *Bangladesh Vision 2021* document was handed over to the leaders of major political parties at the "Nagorik Forum" organised in Dhaka on 9 December 2006, a time of critical political transition in the country.

Bangladesh Vision 2021 is being published as a document that enshrines citizen's aspirations as well as optimism as regards the future of Bangladesh as a country that is built on principles of democracy, inclusiveness, justice and fairness, accountability and good governance.

BANGLADESH Vision 2021

Prepared under the initiative of
NAGORIK COMMITTEE 2006

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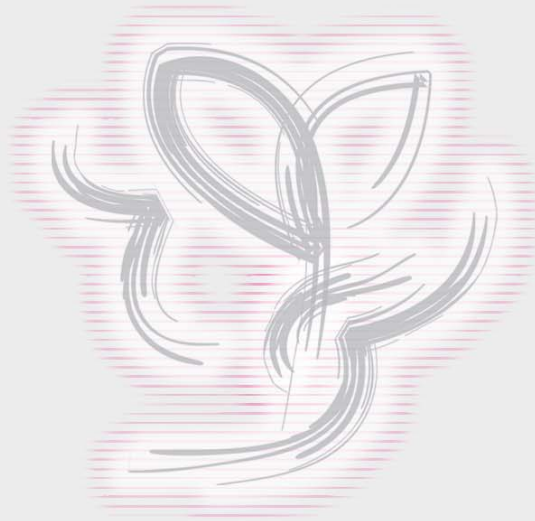


Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)



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NAGORIK COMMITTEE 2006**



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FOREWORD

CPD organised a dialogue entitled *National Election 2007: Civil Society Initiative for Accountable Development* on 20 March 2006 in Dhaka. *Nagorik Committee 2006* a citizen's group was formed at this dialogue and entrusted to prepare a vision for Bangladesh underscoring key medium-term strategic goals. The current version of the *Bangladesh Vision 2021* has emerged through a consultative process with the participation of members of the Nagorik Committee, relevant stakeholders and experts. As the Secretariat of Nagorik Committee, CPD played the leading role in the preparation of the Vision Paper. CPD, in collaboration with *The Daily Star*, *Prothom Alo* and Channel-i, organised 15 regional dialogues at Mymensingh, Jessore, Comilla, Barisal, Sylhet, Rangamati, Chittagong, Rangpur, Khulna, Rajshahi, Faridpur, Pabna, Bogra, Tangail and Narayanganj which focused on electoral and political reforms and people's aspirations as regards development of the country. These regional dialogues were rounded up with a *Nagorik Forum* in Dhaka on 9 December 2006. Around 8000 people attended the aforesaid dialogues where about 1500 participants expressed their views on various issues. Members of the Nagorik Committee were present in the dialogues; they received important insights and views from the citizens which provided key inputs for the Vision document. As part of the initiative, eight Expert Group Consultations were organized each of which dealt with one of the identified eight goals. The draft of the Vision Paper was also posted on the website. Many citizens, both in Bangladesh and abroad, came forward with valuable ideas and suggestions in light of which the initial draft was revised several times.

The Nagorik Committee, at the end of the long consultative process, identified and finalised eight goals that reflect citizens' aspirations with regard to the future of Bangladesh by the year 2021 when Bangladesh will be celebrating 50 years of independence. The goals relate to the following aspirations:

- **To become a participatory democracy,**
- **To have an efficient, accountable, transparent and**
 decentralised system of governance,
- **To become a poverty-free middle-income country,**
- **To have a nation of healthy citizens,**
- **To have a skilled and creative human resource,**



The purpose of the Vision Paper is to project an image of Bangladesh in 2021 that meets the hopes and aspirations of the citizens of the country for an economically inclusive and politically accountable society. The Vision Paper attempts to point out a set of measures to achieve the eight identified goals by 2021

- **To become a globally integrated regional economic and commercial hub,**
- **To be environmentally sustainable and**
- **To be a more inclusive and equitable society.**

The purpose of the Vision Paper is to project an image of Bangladesh in 2021 that meets the hopes and aspirations of the citizens of the country for an economically inclusive and politically accountable society. The Vision Paper attempts to point out a set of measures to achieve the eight identified goals by 2021 through short- and medium-term policy initiatives and interventions. These suggested measures will need to be elaborated through subsequent discussions with stakeholders to arrive at actionable agendas.

It needs to be pointed out that a number of critical issues were raised by the participants at various dialogues and forums organised in the course of preparation of the present document which were not necessarily spelt out within the ambit of the eight identified goals. People asked whether "corruption" could be identified as a separate issue; or should there not be more emphasis on "culture"? It needs to be appreciated that corruption is very much a cross-cutting issue. Similarly, culture, in the broader sense of the term, is part of our being as creative human resource. Each goal has crystallized from a range of ideas. A balance had to be struck between the ambition and the feasibility. The object was to keep the format of the Vision as compact as possible.

The paper is targeted towards all citizens including politicians, policy-makers, entrepreneurs, development practitioners, professionals and activists. The Vision Paper strives to be focused, and easy to read, both in Bangla and English, in order that it could reach out to a wider audience.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We have received meaningful assistance from a cluster of people while preparing the *Bangladesh Vision 2021*. The participants of "Regional Dialogues", especially those who expressed their views on specific issues, had a significant role to play in preparation of this document. We are grateful to the group of experts who took part in the Consultations organized for each of the eight goals. They have contributed to elaborating the themes. Many people have sent in their opinions through website and other means of communication.

Members of the *Nagorik Committee 2006* have put in their time, energy, thoughts and vision in order to give the document its present shape.

We must enter a word of appreciation for Mahfuz Anam of *The Daily Star*, Matiur Rahman of *Prothom Alo*, Shykh Seraj of Channel-i and their colleagues for the outreach and for helping us take the process of preparation of this document to grassroots level.

This initiative would not have been possible without the active participation of CPD Research Director Mustafizur Rahman and the researchers, Communication Head Anisatul Fatema Yousuf and dialogue associates and colleagues at the administration division. CPD Visiting Fellow Iffath Sharif made important contribution in preparing the first draft of this document. Naeem Hassan, Publication, Communication and Outreach Manager, saw through its publication.

We extend our sincere gratitude to Professor Hayat Mamud who has carried out the difficult task of translating the English version of the Vision document into Bengali.

Finally, we would like to express our profound gratitude to the Convener of *Nagorik Committee 2006* and Founder Chairman of CPD Professor Rehman Sobhan, who steered the entire initiative towards its successful completion.

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BANGLADESH VISION 2021

Introduction

Bangladesh came into being following more than two decades of political struggle culminating in the war of independence in 1971. This struggle was inspired by a vision for a democratic, non-communal, prosperous, and equitable society. After 15 years of parliamentary democracy, it is reasonable to take stock of the country's achievements so far, and more importantly, of what the country should accomplish in the next 15 years, which will take us to the 50th anniversary of our independence. By that time the generation, which was 18 years of age at the time of independence in 1971, would be approaching the completion of their working lives. It will be natural to ask what the country will have achieved over the full working life of a generation. Where will the country be? What would it look like?

Our vision incorporates participatory democracy and efficient and honest governance, which, drawing upon a vibrant private sector, will transform Bangladesh into a major commercial hub through creating a competitive economic environment sustained by a well-trained, skilled workforce. In terms of economic development by 2021, we would like Bangladesh to be where Malaysia is today. We must, in the process, build a compassionate society that offers universal access to quality healthcare and education, democratises economic opportunity, takes care of those who are vulnerable, protects the environment from irreversible degradation, and embraces its cultural, religious and ethnic diversity as a source of national pride. Our hope is that the concerned citizens of Bangladesh will embrace these goals and take stock of the targets needed to achieve those. They would commit themselves to implementing the short-term and long-term strategies needed to transform Bangladesh by 2021 into a middle income country, free from extreme forms of poverty, constructed upon strong democratic foundations and well-governed institutions.

The vision for Bangladesh in 2021 is composed of eight inter-related goals. The following eight sections outline some of the key targets that as a nation we would need to achieve under each of these goals if we are to materialise our vision. Some of these targets can be achieved in the short term while others would require a longer time frame for their realisation. We expect that the targets identified in our vision statement to be attained by 2021, will have become an integral part of our national politics, economy and society. A brief discussion of some of the short-term and medium-term strategies required to attain the targets under each goal is provided in the Vision document. However, a separate document has also been prepared that contains a list of tasks requiring priority attention of the Caretaker Government and the next elected government. These priorities have emerged from the regional dialogues conducted by the Nagorik Committee as part of preparation of the *Vision 2021* Document. That document titled *Priorities for the Caretaker Government and an Immediate Action Plan for the Next Elected Government* was presented at a

INTRODUCTION

national dialogue organised by the Nagorik Committee in Dhaka on September 27, 2006. A document titled *Proposed Draft for The Representation of the People (Amendment) Order, 2006* has also been prepared under the initiative of CPD based on wide-ranging consultations with experts and major stakeholder groups. This document puts forward a number of important recommendations with a view to making the parliamentary elections free and fair and ensuring participation of honest and competent candidates in the electoral process. A delegation of the Nagorik Committee Members presented these public documents to the President and Chief Advisor to the Caretaker Government at a meeting on November 19, 2006. These documents were presented to the Secretary General of the *Bangladesh Nationalist Party* (BNP) and the General Secretary of the *Bangladesh Awami League* (AL), at the National Forum held on December 9, 2006. These documents will also be presented to the next government and Members of the newly elected Parliament.

The Vision document has been published as a separate volume to ensure that it reaches as wide an audience of citizens of the country as possible. It is hoped that this document will help us all to apply our minds and think as to what sort of Bangladesh we would like to see when we celebrate fiftieth anniversary of our independence in 2021, and inspire us to work together towards the implementation of that vision.



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GOAL ONE

To become a participatory democracy

By 2021, we envision Bangladesh to have built a participatory democracy that ensures the principle of equality of rights, opportunity, and treatment for all its citizens. The following measures encapsulate some of the democratic principles and institutions that are fundamental to a functioning participatory democracy. Whilst some improvement in the functioning of the democratic process may be realised in the short-term, establishing well-functioning democratic institutions may require a longer time frame.

1.1 Strengthened intra-party democracy and financial transparency

Political parties will exercise internal party democracy and adopt a participatory decision-making process through electing leaders at all tiers (including the election of the party leader). Active membership of political parties must be a prerequisite for seeking party nominations for parliamentary election. Party candidates nominated for elections will be selected through a nominating convention. Primary members of political parties will have a voice in the nomination process through party primaries at the constituency level.

Mandatory political party registration with the Election Commission will involve the submission of a copy of the party constitution, party manifesto, names of persons acting on the party's behalf, minutes of meetings which decide on nominations and the approval of the party manifesto, audit reports and information on all sources of party funding. Information regarding funding sources and all financial accounts of political parties must be audited and made publicly available as in the case of shareholding companies. Political parties must fulfil their reporting obligations under Section 44CC and 44CCC of the Representation of People Order, 1972 (RPO).

1.2 A credible election process

A strong and neutral Election Commission (EC) will enforce all laws pertaining to holding free and fair elections. A number of immediate actions will need to be taken to ensure a credible election process. For example, as indicated above, political parties will face greater formal accountability through legally mandated provisions for registration with the EC. To this end, an amendment of Chapter VIA (sections 90A and 90B) of the RPO should be made to make political party registration compulsory and the registration requirement more specific and stringent. Whilst a separate document has been prepared for the Nagorik Committee with regard to amendments to the RPO, this Vision document also refers to some of the practical steps that are required to be taken.

Under the provisions of the High Court order of May 2005, the EC should collect from all candidates, along with their nomination papers, information regarding their educational qualifications, professional experience, sources of income, tax returns for the previous three years, the total amount of wealth owned by them and their immediate family members, any previous criminal record and/or default of bank loans, and any past record on switching from one party to another. This information along with information on funding sources and all financial accounts of political parties must be made publicly available to help voters make more informed electoral choices. Candidates who fail to provide such full disclosure or who make false disclosures must be either disqualified, or their election must be declared null and void if already elected. Punishment for failure to comply with the code of conduct for candidates specified in the RPO will be made more severe, and those violating the code will be prosecuted. Loan defaulters, their guarantors and dependents, as well as convicted criminals will be disqualified from contesting the elections. Government bureaucrats and Members of the armed forces will not be allowed to contest parliamentary elections unless they have retired from active service for at least three years. All elected candidates must continue to declare their wealth every year up to four years after the elections.

State control over public electronic or print media will not exist before, during and after elections. The part of the bureaucracy commissioned to oversee the elections will be placed under the full control of the EC from the date of declaration of the election schedule up to six months after the election is held. The EC will have the authority to punish officials for any negligence or offences connected with their duty. The existing Code of Conduct during elections will be enacted as a law, violation of which will authorise the EC to cancel anyone's candidature at any stage of the election. Additional Benches of the High Court will be constituted for the speedy disposal of election petitions within a mandated time limit of 180 days. For this to happen, the Privilege Act for MP's and opportunities for adjournments will be suitably amended.

There should be a "no-vote" option incorporated on the ballot papers (via the amendment of the RPO), so that voters could exercise the option of not voting if they do not want to vote for any of the listed candidates. If the number of "no-vote" options exceeds that of the highest number of total votes received by any one candidate then a re-election with fresh nominations should be held. This provision could be put in place by the CEC in consultation with the CTG. To stop false voting, a computerised database of the voter list should be produced over the next few years and periodically reviewed to introduce new voters and to delete those who

Political parties will renegotiate a "code of conduct" where it is agreed that all parties debate substantive issues in Parliament in a respectful manner.

Replacing confrontational street politics with a more dialogue and debate-oriented politics will also change the incentive structures of political parties.

have died. Each voter will have an Identity Card issued by the EC. Alternatively, putting in place a system of mandatory registration of the population by the government will also allow the use of these Identity Cards for the purposes of elections.

1.3 A transparent campaign financing system

Campaign financing will be provided through the national budget to support political parties on the basis of an agreed formula. Private financing may be maintained but kept within a specific ceiling for each contributor. All funds, public and private, received by the parties, will be subject to public audit. Appropriate monitoring and verification of the election expenditures by the recipients of these grants will have to be conducted by the EC. Election campaign cost-cutting measures will be made mandatory such as joint projection meetings, single black and white posters for candidates in each constituency with information on all contesting candidates, etc. Such a publicly financed election process will aim to eliminate the perverse incentives that currently prevail, whereby candidates spend a substantial amount of money, beyond the given limit, to get elected only to use their elected offices to recoup their election-related investments with profit. Budgetary support, subject to public audit, may also be extended to political parties represented in Parliament, to build up their party organisations on a transparent and professional basis. In this context, the experience of other countries will be studied.

1.4 A civil and enlightened dialogue and debate oriented political culture

Political parties will renegotiate a "code of conduct" where it is agreed that all parties debate substantive issues in Parliament in a respectful manner. Replacing confrontational street politics with a more dialogue and debate-oriented politics will also change the incentive structures of political parties. Instead of depending on money and muscle power, political parties will draw in bright and competent people. The monetary stakes in losing or winning elections will accordingly be much lower than it is today. Honest, dedicated and competent politicians, committed to working towards advancing the interests of their fellow citizens, will thereby establish themselves as the dominant presence in the *Jatio Sangshad*.

1.5 An Effective Parliament and Accountable Members of Parliament

The Parliament would serve to safeguard public accountability. The main responsibilities of elected members of the Parliament will be in law-making and holding the government accountable. Members will represent their constituencies and give expression to their grievances in the parliament. However, local development activities will remain the prerogative of elected local bodies. MPs will be given freedom in casting their votes in the house in all but a selected range of issues, such as a no-confidence motion, without the fear of losing their parliamentary membership. This will entail the amendment of Article 70 of the Constitution. The Speaker and a Deputy Speaker (elected from an opposition party) will ensure the participation of both ruling and opposition party MPs in the

parliamentary debates. The Speaker and Deputy Speaker(s) will resign from their respective parties. Accordingly, provisions of Article 70 will not be applicable to them. Parliamentary Standing Committees will be backed by an effective secretariat with appropriate budgetary support to draw upon outside expertise to service their work as well as test public opinion as regards bills submitted in the Parliament.

MPs, in addition to enacting legislation, will also play an active role in scrutinising government policy and ensuring transparency and accountability in government actions via the Parliamentary Committees. Opposition MPs will be proportionally represented in all Parliamentary Committees to ensure effective participation and will be invited to chair at least half the Committees including key Committees such as the Public Accounts Committee. These Committees will be constituted on the first day of the first session of the Parliament. Necessary amendments of the constitution will be made to this effect. The Committees will invite outside experts to give evidence, and schedule public hearings. There will be a provision for the Ministers to face no-confidence motions and for "recall" of the MPs for loan default, tax evasion, pending corruption cases, and also where they have forfeited the confidence of their electorate. Misuse of public funds and resources for travel will be stopped. For example, a cap on number of visits by Ministers to their local constituencies, by using public resources, will be put in place, perhaps to limit this to no more than six times in a year. The practice of the Prime Minister answering questions on a specific day will remain and the questions tabled by the Opposition will be given priority on that day when the leader of Opposition will be legally obliged to attend the session. All Parliamentary sessions involving discussions of public interest, including the Prime Minister's Question hour, will be broadcast by the electronic media.

1.6 Mandatory nominations for directly elected female Members of Parliament

Legislation will be introduced in the next Parliament to ensure that the number of seats in Parliament will be increased and that at least one-third of the seats in Parliament will be reserved for direct contestation by women. The goal will be to ensure that by 2021 at least 50% of the representation in Parliament will be by women. Alternatively, over the next five years, political parties may be mandated by law to nominate women candidates in at least 33 percent (this figure may rise up to 50% by 2021) of the constituencies that they contest in the parliamentary elections.

1.7 Widely implemented Right to Information Act

Free flow of information must serve as a fundamental aspect of Bangladesh's democracy. To that effect, a Right to Information Act must be legislated by Parliament as soon as possible. This Act must ensure that all public representatives as well as officials will provide periodic information on their state of wealth. The legislation will also require all public officials (elected and appointed) to share information on any government transaction or on the decision-making process, with citizens, including the media.

By 2021 the goal will be to establish complete transparency in governance so that all government financial transactions and records, except those which involve national

security and criminal investigations, will be electronically accessible to all citizens, along with the financial and fiscal status of key public officials, including those in the autonomous bodies and elected representatives at all levels.

1.8 An independent, efficient, decentralised and corruption-free judiciary

Currently all magistrates are discharging dual functions – judicial and executive – and are under the direct control of the Ministry of Establishment, the Ministry of Home Affairs and also the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs. As a result, in discharging their judicial functions they are very often influenced by the executive. This situation has increasingly compromised the independence of the lower judiciary and is subversive of the functioning of a democratic society. All political parties over the last two decades have committed themselves before the electorate to separate the judiciary from the executive. Three successive elected governments have failed to honour their pledge. The first act of the next Parliament must be to immediately legislate the separation of the judiciary from the executive as provided in the Constitution in Article 22 and also directed by the Supreme Court.

Independence of the judiciary will not be enough to improve the functioning of these lower courts. A system of monitoring and supervision of the judicial process will have to be in place, along with improved training of magistrates and legal education of lawyers.

Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms will be more widely used to ensure speedy justice to the rural people by functioning primarily as pre-trial courts and settling rural disputes through negotiations. Retired magistrates, school headmasters, as well as others who command respect within the community will be selected for this purpose.

The upper judiciary is also increasingly being exposed to a process of politicisation, through judicial appointments, even at the highest level. Special measures will be legislated to ensure a mechanism of appointment and advancement in the upper judiciary which is kept completely free from political influence in the selection process. The Supreme Court should introduce a system of recording the exact reasons if and when any judge feels "embarrassed" to hear particular cases. This will have to be filed with the Supreme Judicial Council.

1.9 Guaranteed protection of human rights and the rule of law

Part III of the Constitution provides for a catalogue of rights as fundamental, which the state is mandated to guarantee for its citizenry. For example, Article 27 provides that all citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of law. Articles 28 to 44 constitutionally guarantee other rights that could be summarised as a "Bill of Rights" for all citizens of Bangladesh.

Strategies that help implement these rights-based constitutional provisions are needed. One mechanism is to further strengthen the demand for justice and human rights on the part of the public. This could be done via educating the public on constitutional provisions that guarantee a minimum level of public service for every

citizen on a daily basis. A simplified "Citizens' Bill of Rights" that guarantees a minimum level of public service for every citizen on a daily basis and that is based on the ideals of our Constitution could be widely available to inform every citizen of his or her basic rights. This list could include the following: the right to earning a decent livelihood; the right to food; the right to quality education and healthcare; the right to security of self and property; the right to basic infrastructure such as clean water, uninterrupted power, reliable gas supply, access to telephones, good roads; the right to freedom of speech; the right to freedom of movement, the right to freedom of association; and the right to a fair system where rules are the same for everybody irrespective of income levels, gender, religion or ethnicity. If citizens are aware of their fundamental rights as provided in the Constitution, any citizen should be empowered to seek justice for any violation of their "Bill of Rights" through a Special High Court Bench. Having an independent and efficient judicial system should help to enforce this Bill of Rights and in the process guarantee protection of human rights and enforcement of the rule of law.

1.10 A non-partisan and professional public administration system

The public administration will be non-partisan in the discharge of its responsibilities irrespective of which political party is in power. Specifically, the work environment in the public administration system will be such that there will be no political bias in dealing with the affairs of the state, especially with respect to the maintenance of law and order, administration of and access to justice and planning and execution of development programs. One of the mechanisms to bring about a non-partisan administration is to recognise and reward individual merit and performance as the basis for recruitment and promotion of civil service professionals.

1.11 An elected President with meaningful discretionary power

The President will be elected based on an electoral college composed of the Members of Parliament and all elected members of the local government. The President, so elected, will be a person of eminence, prominence and exceptional integrity. The President will be invested with increased discretionary powers such as the ability to enforce neutrality in public administration, to appoint Supreme Court Judges, to act as the last authority of appeal for public servant, and to receive the audit reports on the activities of the Government directly from the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General and not through the Prime

The public administration will be non-partisan in the discharge of its responsibilities irrespective of which political party is in power. Specifically, the work environment in the public administration system will be such that there will be no political bias in dealing with the affairs of the state

Minister. This will help to provide some checks and balances between the powers of the Prime Minister and the President.

1.12 A vigilant and active civil society

To ensure that the democratic institutions work effectively, the role of the civil society as a monitoring and pressure group will be important. The objective of civil society would be to act in a non-partisan manner to enforce transparency and accountability on the part of political leaders and government officials who are entrusted with the maintenance and improvement of governance standards. This will involve engaging in a continued process of dialogue on the part of members of civil society with politicians and government officials, especially at the local level. The participation of a wide range of citizens irrespective of income levels, religion, ethnicity, gender and age must be ensured in all civil society initiatives. All activities of the civil society will be transparent and in the public domain.



GOAL TWO

To have an efficient, accountable, transparent and decentralised system of governance

A key ingredient for a participatory democratic process to be sustainable is the capacity of the government to efficiently manage the various institutions set up to run the affairs of the state and to uphold democratic ideals. This calls for a decisive government with a strong capacity for policy-making, effective governance and managing the economy. The challenge for the government will be to keep pace with the rapid changes in the global economy, through adapting to a more professional culture. This will involve full disclosure of all government activities, and increased dialogue with citizens to make government policies and activities responsive to public needs. A professionally oriented, non-partisan bureaucracy, recruited on the basis of merit through an impartial recruitment system, is mandatory for sustaining a democratic system of governance. We envision the following key features that should characterise the governance of Bangladesh by 2021.

2.1 A transparent and accountable policy-making process

Transparency in the policy-making process and accountability mechanisms that link promises and commitments to performance are essential for sound governance. An informed public opinion is central to an improved policy-making process. In this regard the press and the electronic media will be expected to hold the government fully accountable by fostering public policy debate and by exposing any abuse of office by public officials. This will require further improvements in the professionalism of the media by enhancing journalistic standards.

To ensure that the public has sufficient voice in the formulation of public policy, all ministries will have an interactive "web-based citizens' forum" to seek suggestions from citizens on various policies and programmes, as well as respond to their queries. Ministries will also periodically organise 'citizen's hearings' where the concerned agency will respond to questions and grievances from any citizen who attends the hearings. Government officials will be constantly held accountable by the Parliamentary Committees. The press will have access to these Committee meetings, and the Parliamentary Rules of Procedure will be amended to allow discussion of the reports presented by the Committees, particularly the Public Accounts Committee, in the Parliament. Meetings on certain sensitive national security issues however will remain outside the purview of the press and the public. All Ministries will have an active

Advisory Committee for regular consultations which will include members from the civil society, private sector, and professional experts.

An appropriate appointing mechanism will be developed for all important constitutionally determined posts including those in the Judiciary, Public Service Commission and Election Commission. These appointments will be done in a non-discretionary manner and with exceptionally high degree of objectivity and transparency with a view to selecting persons with consensual identity who are of high standing and eminence and are perceived as non-partisan.

2.2 A transparent procurement system

The Public Procurement Law will be implemented as soon as possible, and enforced by the government so that a platform is created for generating better accountability for budgetary spending. In the next few years, members of the civil society and the media will have to play a crucial role in procurement monitoring so that any violations of the law are detected, widely publicised and offenders prosecuted. Over the medium term, wide use of ICT to establish an e-procurement culture will help to make the procurement process both efficient and transparent, and thus lessen the need for watchdog institutions. For example, tender documents will have to be posted on the web and submission of these documents will also be done via the web. This will offer the government and the bidders a paperless environment, free from delays, and physical insecurities of any kind. Effective competition will be enhanced, and corrupt and collusive bidding practices will become more difficult. The outcome of the bidding process and the reasons behind the award decision will also be made electronically accessible to the public.

2.3 Wide use of e-governance in all government agencies

In addition to using ICT to improve the procurement system, wide use of e-governance will improve inter-agency coordination and increase efficiency within agencies. Government-wide email use will be promoted in the short-term to improve communication and information flow between and within agencies. This will allow better management of complex inter-agency projects, and permit more communication between government officials and the public. Over the medium term on-line information relating to all government offices and services will have to be made available to improve efficiency and transparency within the government, thereby, reducing the scope for corruption. For example, the use of on-line tax services (such as information regarding what is taxable income, tax rates, tax forms) and the ability to file tax returns on-line will help improve both tax collection and its administration. On-line

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services will also minimise the time needed for the public and businesses to access government services (e.g. trade licenses, trademarks, citizens' registration, patent, and land registration, payments of taxes, fees and public utility bills). Necessary laws needed to govern IT-based governance will have to be enacted and put in place.

In order to make e-governance available to every citizen IT kiosks shall be established in every village in Bangladesh by 2021. IT should be available to all households to avail of the e-governance opportunities indicated above. To ensure this, a massive national effort will have to be launched to educate and equip all citizens, irrespective of income, so that access to e-governance will become universal as well as a public resource.

2.4 An effective Anti-corruption Commission

The Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) will have to be composed of persons who enjoy enormous public credibility and whose integrity is widely recognised. Appointments to the Commission will be made on non-partisan basis through a constitutionally mandated selection procedure. The Commission will be in full authority to investigate, *suo moto*, private and public officials, ministries, corporations, and other agencies. Specially appointed District and Session Judges will handle trials of the accused in the cases filed by the ACC. Setting the right incentive structures for the operations of the Commission to be impartial is of utmost importance. The Commission will be staffed by its own well-trained investigating cadre recruited from different services (e.g. police, income tax etc.) who would be exclusively accountable to the Commission.

2.5 Planning, implementation and monitoring of the budget from a poverty alleviation perspective

Budgets will be prepared through a participatory process which gives full opportunity to the more deprived segments of the population to enable them benefit from its implementation. Public Accounts will be transparently maintained and audited. In this respect transparency in the planning and budgeting process will be ensured through pre-budget consultations with various sections of the society, particularly groups of the marginalised, as well as groups of rural small and medium entrepreneurs. Structured institutional mechanisms will be put in place to provide opportunities for civil society to have a say in the budgetary process, particularly on the level and the composition of spending, the quality of service delivery, and in the implementation and monitoring of the budget. One step to improve transparency will be to introduce sign-boards next to government offices with budget received and key heads under which the resources were spent. Parliamentary Committees shall have an opportunity to review and discuss budget proposals before they are finalised and tabled in the full house, as well as to periodically review the implementation of the Budget. The goal by 2021 will be to ensure that the budget is prepared through a comprehensive consultative process, reaching out to the grass roots and that all public expenditures are made fully transparent and linked to specific outcomes which are spelt out in the budget.

2.6 An independent Bangladesh Bank

The Bangladesh Bank will ensure that money supply, cost of credit and monetary management in general are consistent with national macroeconomic objectives. The Bank will continue to play its role as the banker for currency issue, responsible for safeguarding the value of the taka. The Bank will serve as the banker and financial adviser to the Government, the authority responsible for managing monetary policy and the financial system as well as the banker to the commercial banks. To be effective in its role, particularly in enforcing financial discipline on the part of the government, the Bangladesh Bank will be fully autonomous (free from the influences of political and vested interest groups). The Bangladesh Bank must exercise its regulatory and supervisory authority over the private commercial banks and the nationalised banking institutions.

By 2021 the goal of monetary policy will be to ensure that credit is available to all citizens with particular attention to the financially deprived. This should not just ensure that micro-credit is available to all but that mainstream financial institutions should intermediate financial flows between the more organised urban sector and the resource-deprived in the rural areas. The role of Bangladesh Bank will, by 2021, be redesigned to ensure that savings instruments and access to credit are widely dispersed.

2.7 An efficient, transparent and people-friendly land administration

The land administration system and maintenance of land records will be decentralised, IT-based, simplified, made less corrupt and people-friendly with more reliance on local government bodies for updating and maintenance of records on-line. This process has to be linked with an overall programme of political decentralisation and development of the local government system. Certification of land ownership (CLO) will supplement ownership-based land records. Accordingly, a cadastral survey and recording of rights at fixed intervals to update ownership records for all plots will be carried out on Upazila basis. Surveys using modern techniques of aerial survey may also be considered in due course. Changes in the relevant laws to ensure women's full right to inherit land and other properties from their parents and husbands will be considered. Rights of indigenous people as also of religious minorities to inherit and retain control over their ancestral lands will be ensured.

2.8 A decentralised and devolved local government system

Local governments at different levels will be transformed into "self-governing" bodies in the true sense of the term. In this respect, these institutions will be progressively decentralised to establish a devolved local government system constitutionally mandated with adequate transfer of functions, powers and authority with a guaranteed share in centrally mobilised revenue resources on the basis of population. Local government bodies will be empowered to collect and utilise their own resources, with effective accountability mechanisms in place, which provide for regular auditing and

reporting of accounts. Initiatives will be taken to build up the required capacity of the local government institutions to undertake these responsibilities. The Members of Parliament shall not be involved in any manner with the affairs of the local government. Budgeting, development planning and implementation processes will be participatory and regularly monitored by local members of civil society. A specified number of seats will be reserved at every tier of the local government for female candidates who will be directly elected to these seats through a process of electoral contestation.

2.9 A trusted, decentralised, and impartial police force

We want a police force that serves the people and aspires to enhance the quality of everyday life. Such a force will be expected to work to uphold constitutional rights, enforce the law, preserve the peace, reduce fear, and provide for a safe environment for all citizens, especially for vulnerable groups (such as women, minorities, the elderly, orphans). Securing the trust of the citizens must be made the over-arching goal of the police administration. Each member of the police force must be governed by a set of values that pledges them to protect the lives and property of their fellow citizens and impartially enforce the law. Crime will be fought by both prevention and the aggressive pursuit of violators of the law. The police will maintain a higher standard of integrity than is generally expected of others because so much is expected of them.

To ensure that law enforcement machinery remains accessible to citizens at all levels, the police administration will have to be decentralised through establishing independent, district level police forces, each headed by district-specific Inspector-Generals. Each police force will be accountable to the elected district-level local government bodies and must be kept completely non-partisan in the discharge of their duties. A system of providing countrywide ratings for each of the district level police force will be carried out periodically to instil a sense of competition among the police forces as well as pride in the people that they serve. Rural police under local government will be strengthened until local governments take over all police functions by 2021.

To cover trans-district and national level crimes a national investigative agency, equipped with specialised forensic capabilities, equipment and experts will be established.

Certain measures can be put in place now as first steps in improving the overall trustworthiness of the police. Repealing Section 54 will be one such measure. Displaying information on what police can and

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cannot do, in all police stations and in the print and electronic media, will be another measure needed to enhance citizen's awareness.

By 2021 citizens' watch committees will be established in every village and municipal ward to exercise oversight over the police force, exercise vigilance over the state of law and order in their area and to build an institutionalised system of consultation between citizens and the police to ensure a peaceful and law abiding society.

2.10 A permanent Pay and Services Commission

A permanent pay and services commission will be established to continuously review the public administration structure at all levels (including local government), and to periodically recommend revisions in the compensation structures of public servants. The Commission will be manned with officials and experts recruited on the basis of experience and competence in a non-partisan manner.



GOAL THREE

To become a poverty-free middle-income country

We believe that Bangladesh has the potential to join the ranks of the middle-income countries by 2021. This will mean reaching an average per capita income level of around US\$1000 (in present day dollar terms), based on a GDP growth rate of at least 8 per cent per annum over the next fifteen years. Our point of departure is to design policies and institution which enable all segments of the population, but particularly the resourceless, to be able to both contribute and share in the rewards from the growth process.

We are aware that even at the level of per capita income that we aspire to achieve, a substantial percentage of population will continue to remain below the poverty line of most countries. We are also aware that the task of poverty alleviation in Bangladesh is all the more challenging and compelling in view of the persistence of extreme and chronic poverty with a growing inequality in income distribution. Some of the marginalised groups such as *monga*-stricken people, tribal people, *harijans*, *rishis*, etc. continue to live as 'forgotten people'. The growing feminisation of poverty and the large number of children living in poverty makes the task even more challenging. Our strategies will be designed to adequately address these challenges.

We also recognise that most of the existing GO-NGO interventions have not been able to effectively integrate the productive capacities of the resourceless into the faster growing sectors of the economy. We would like to address the attendant challenges by making the growth process fully participative and inclusive so that poverty will be effectively eliminated from our society. We would accordingly need to fully involve the disadvantaged in the process of identification of their problems as well as the search for their solution. Our approach will be informed by our belief that the disadvantaged possess the capacity to address many of their own problems but remain excluded from the mainstream of the economy due to the structural injustices which reproduce poverty and inequality in our society.

It will be the state's responsibility to correct these injustices. To do so we will have to transform resourceless citizens into productive agents of development by drawing upon their enormous potential as entrepreneurs, sources of productive labour and as a potential market. The challenge before us is to work out how to build upon our current achievements, and respond to the emerging challenges presented by a fast globalising world over the next 15 years.

By 2021, the structure of the Bangladesh economy is expected to change further. The share of agriculture in the GDP, already reduced to about 15 per cent, will come down

further in contrast to the rising share of the manufacturing sector and services sector. Productivity of agriculture will be enhanced substantively to feed a growing population.

This long-term development strategy must also envisage optimum utilisation of natural resources including gas, coal and water. Energy security must be seen as an important policy objective to meet the needs of domestic investors, and attracting FDI. Electrification of the entire country will be given the highest priority and will be completed by 2021. Appropriate and innovative agencies and institutional mechanisms to support our development strategy will be put in place to realise the comparative advantages and capabilities of the public and private sectors. Financial resources, through higher public savings and greater revenue mobilisation, as well as foreign resource inflows, will be mobilised in support of this balanced strategy. The relative role of state and market, as also an appropriate balance between the public and private investment and FDI, will be identified. Over the past years, the competitive capacity of the public sector has degenerated and its workers have been increasingly demoralised. This state of affairs will be radically changed. Public spending, which is low as a share of GDP even by developing country standards, will be increased with more emphasis on efficiency and better resource allocation. New and innovative methods of public action will be put in place including corporatisation of the public sector, new incentive structures for its employees and, where appropriate, privatisation of their management. Wider access to equity share ownership in the state owned enterprises (SOE) by the workers as well as other income groups will be ensured. Best practices in GO-NGO collaboration in service delivery will be widely replicated. An environment of fair competition will be promoted through appropriate institutional and oversight mechanisms where special attention will be given to enhance the competitive capacity of small and medium enterprises (SME).

To design a development strategy which places resourceless members of society at the centre of the development process, and not as its incidental beneficiaries, will require creative policies and innovative institutions. Our strategy will involve increased investment in health, nutrition, and education designed to enhance the participation and productivity of the population, and particularly the resourceless. Sections four, five and eight in the paper address some of these issues relating to the democratisation of the development process. This section mainly focuses on some of the key features that will have to characterise the economy both in the short and long term in order for Bangladesh to become a country free from abject poverty as well as a globally competitive middle-income country by 2021.

3.1 Greater productivity, diversification and commercialisation of agriculture

In the face of a declining share of cultivable land, increasing productivity in agriculture will have to be secured through greater investments in quality research, extension, mechanised cultivation and crop diversification. The public sector will have to be the major investor in most of these areas, and will continue to remain a major lender for the agricultural sector as will be the specialised banks. A new generation of micro-finance

institutions will deliver credit to small farms and effectively respond to the needs of the assetless. A more commercial and technology-driven farming system will have to be built upon in order to enhance the productivity of small farms and to move towards higher value crops. There will be *Specialised Agricultural Zones* for promoting specialised production of crops, vegetables, fruits, livestock and aquaculture products. These zones will be equipped with the necessary facilities for processing, packaging, storing, and finally marketing the products up to the retail level and export (with access to special cargo-planes to transport perishable products). Special institutional arrangements, geared to enabling small producers to participate in the value additional process associated with crop diversification and communication, will be designed. The global market for agricultural products is expected to be significantly opened up in the coming years. Connecting Bangladesh agriculture to the global market opportunities will be a challenge. This will demand negotiating skills by the government as well as the development of specialised financing and marketing institutions to enable the rural economy to appropriately respond to the emerging opportunities. On the other hand, Bangladesh, with support from other LDCs, will ensure that food security concerns of LDC members are appropriately safeguarded in the WTO.

To arrest the deteriorating soil fertility, and to improve it, organic agriculture will constitute a large part of the agri-business industry via increased use of locally produced organic fertilizer. Given that there is bound to be an increasing global demand for organic food products, locally produced and processed organic food products could constitute a sizeable portion of our exports. Appropriate irrigation infrastructure and equipment will have to be put in place in the short term as well as access to extension services for the expedient diffusion of new and innovative organic farming methods. An organic food certification mechanism will be put in place, especially for exports.

3.2 Accelerated growth in the industry and services sectors

By 2021, industry will have to account for a larger share of the GDP, around 40 per cent, while agriculture's contribution will fall further to perhaps around 8-10 per cent. Such structural shifts in the economy are in line with the rapid economic development seen in the East Asian countries. However, this will require higher productivity in both the services and industrial sectors along with an increasing capacity of the agricultural sector to feed a growing population.

The promotion of industry, including agro-processing as well as simple manufacturing, will play an important role in contributing to

The promotion of industry, including agro-processing as well as simple manufacturing, will play an important role in contributing to economic growth, and more importantly, in creating opportunities for those rural workers who will no longer be absorbed by the agricultural sector.

economic growth, and more importantly, in creating opportunities for those rural workers who will no longer be absorbed by the agricultural sector. How will the next generation of industries look? In addition to building on our achievements in the RMG sector (with gradual integration of linkages), and also food processing, leather, pharmaceutical, ceramics, home textiles and light engineering products, new sectors will need to emerge to take advantage of our competitiveness. New export-oriented industries could include jewellery, diamond cutting and polishing, assembled electronic goods, data-processing, etc. A fresh appraisal of the jute industry may be called for to explore export markets in eco-friendly packaging. The growth of domestic demand will also play a major part in reshaping the industrial strategy. A medium-term strategic trade policy will be put in place with appropriate time-bound support for selected sectors which may include agro-food processing, fertilizer, textiles and other sectors to be identified through careful analysis of the comparative and competitive advantages in the context of a fast changing global market.

Special attention will be given to developing and enhancing the productivity of small and medium industry to meet the growing demand of the domestic market as well as to service the export market. To meet the needs of this sector, institutions and policies will be designed to ensure ready access to credit, technology upgradation and the advantages of external economies through integrated infrastructure, which enable small entrepreneurs to aggregate their capacities in order to compete, on better terms, in the global and national market.

The services sector will expand in tandem with a growing economy from supportive policies and institutions. Areas that are likely to make a major contribution to peoples' income and employment include trade, transport, financial, technical, professional and knowledge-based services. Initiatives will be taken so that the growth of the services sector is supported through appropriate policies and institutions.

3.3 A competitive investment climate

Improving the investment climate is a cross-cutting issue which will be required to ensure the competitive strength of our industry and services sectors in the future. This will entail an institutional set-up that is free from corruption and unnecessary regulatory hassles, existence of harmonious labour relations and labour laws that meet global standards, simplified export and import procedures via the use of e-investment services, an improved law and order situation, deepening of the capital market. Development of infrastructure facilities and services—especially in the areas of highways, port and airport facilities, telecommunications and the power sector will be of crucial importance in this context. To facilitate investment and movement of goods, careful study will be made to assess the options of building a second Dhaka-Chittagong Highway and/or establishment of a modernised rail link between the two cities. In all these areas new and modernising investments will be backed up by a transformation in the quality of governance to ensure a globally competitive standard of services. A concrete target here will be to ensure that Bangladesh's 'country risk rating' by international agencies is at par

with best examples in Asia by 2021. We can achieve such targets only if domestic savings and investments grow at a fast pace.

3.4 Increased global market access by Bangladeshi firms

In the context of increased trade liberalisation and globalisation, Bangladesh will have to remain an open economy with the fullest access to export markets. Securing such access will necessitate internationally competitive export supply capabilities such as reliable infrastructure, export financing schemes, appropriate technology acquisitions, human resource development for skilled and technical expertise, and compliance standards to ensure quality control, to name a few. Access to the global market by firms will be facilitated through appropriate 'forward linkage' support. To create the necessary human resources, a special trade cadre will be created and commissioned to manage complex negotiations in the WTO and various Regional Trading Arrangements (RTAs), and to monitor and secure Bangladesh's trade interests.

3.5 A diversified export base and markets

Opportunities in export-oriented industry other than in the RMG sector will need to be secured in a world where there is increasing globalisation of production. Sectors that appear to have high potentials include pharmaceuticals, ceramics, home textiles, leather products, toys, cement, eco-packaging using jute, clay costume jewellery, assembled electronics and data processing. A well-established design industry will support the export industry in venturing into high end products, thereby increasing overall earnings.

To sustain a robust export growth, we will have to find new export destinations especially in the fast growing economies of East and South East Asia as well as in the emerging markets of Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa and Australia. To that effect, we will set up trade promotion offices in specific regions to promote Bangladeshi products. India and China are poised to be two of the largest economies by 2021. These two countries will be key destinations of our exports of the future. To realise the potential opportunities, disaggregated level analysis of export opportunities will be carried out to identify niche markets in these countries. The global services market is growing at an unprecedented rate. The services sector-driven economies of the developed world will create many opportunities for export of services for skilled personnel including in health services, e.g. for nurses in view of the demographic dynamics of the more advanced economies. Bangladesh should be well positioned to access these emerging export opportunities.

3.6 A sizeable domestic consumer market

Much of the future expansion in industry will have to come from labour-intensive production in the private sector. As more and more people are gainfully employed and/or become owners of equity and begin sharing the dividends produced through economic growth, their purchasing power will be enhanced. This will stimulate the

domestic market. The goal will be to meet a large part of this domestic demand through the growth of a competitive domestic industry where small scale and medium sized industries will play a significant role drawing strength on improved productivity and competitiveness.

3.7 Development of small town growth hubs via rural non-farm industries and services

By 2021 rural non-farm industry will include vibrant micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that are engaged primarily in manufacturing rather than trade activities. Growth in the rural non-farm sector will necessitate an enabling rural investment climate, efficient delivery of services and good communication network. This will involve the following set of initiatives: greatly expanding rural electrification and telecommunications coverage and nationwide inter-modal transport links; a sound rural financial system; better flood and natural disaster management; and a decentralisation of government services. An expanding rural non-farm sector will create more peri-urban centres, and thus lessen the pace of urban migration. An extensive and efficient rural infrastructure will be key to achieving these targets.

3.8 Sound financial institutions and greater financial depth

A competitive manufacturing sector needs to be supported by an equally efficient banking and financial sector. Deepening of the financial institutions beyond private banks will be required. Initiatives to stimulate the capital market, including through promoting a corporate bond market and unloading shares of foreign companies, will be put into effect. A strong and independent Bangladesh Bank (BB) will ensure that monetary policy is commensurate with the industrial policy. Though private sector banks are expected to play an increasingly important role, there will also be a role for public sector financial institutions. Both public and private banks will be held accountable to good corporate governance standards. Debt-recovery rates will be accelerated and loan defaulters will be dealt with through appropriate punitive measures; trade unions will be de-politicised, and product diversification will take place particularly in ICT-based banking (e.g. e-banking, ATM-banking, phone-banking, etc.). Necessary legal infrastructure and technology will be in place to facilitate the wide use of e-commerce. Given the desired expansion in the rural non-farm sector in the next 15 years, a large part of the expansion of such modern banking services will be in MSME financing. Large microfinance institutions could share some of the MSME market, as well as help develop innovative MSME loan delivery mechanisms based on social collateral and ICT-based banking. The large

A strong and independent Bangladesh Bank (BB) will ensure that monetary policy is commensurate with the industrial policy. Though private sector banks are expected to play an increasingly important role, there will also be a role for public sector financial institutions.

and growing volume of overseas migrant remittances will be increasingly mobilised by the diversified and well-regulated micro-finance institutions who have acquired the financial credibility to compete for such savings, and the organisational capacity to expeditiously deliver remittances to their clients.

3.9 A skilled workforce

Highest priority will have to be given to building up a large base of skilled workers calibrated to match the growth and structural transformation of our economy as well as the expanding demand for migrant workers within the global economy. Accordingly, budgetary allocation for education will be increased substantially in the short term. Equal emphasis will be given on both tertiary education and vocational training with a view to building such a skilled workforce in a short span of time to meet the emerging demands for knowledge-based workers of an increasingly technology-driven and service-oriented world. To remain competitive in the information society of the future, we will invest in scientific and technical-vocational education at all levels of education today. De-politicisation of the education system is a must, as is increasing the access to world-class quality of higher education by talented but poor students via scholarships for scientific, technical and vocational training. A rethinking of the education system will be required (more in Goal Five).

3.10 Higher foreign exchange earnings from the export of semi-skilled and skilled labour

Bangladesh's demographic trend in the coming years promises to be increasingly advantageous relative to developed nations with ageing population. These ageing societies will increasingly require geriatric nursing care services that cannot be replaced by technology but will depend on the large size of the young health workers that Bangladesh can provide. Other niches for Bangladesh in the expanding global services sector market can also be created by exporting labour as well as services for certain emerging industries such as data entry, medical transcriptions, hotel and hospital management services, etc. A steady supply of well-trained and skilled professionals for knowledge-based industries that outsource services will be maintained. Targets will be in place to increase the average size of remittance per Bangladeshi worker so that these are in line with, if not higher than, neighbouring countries such as India and Sri Lanka by 2021. These remittances will be used to enhance domestic investment and to enable migrant workers to use their savings to acquire productive assets, including shares in the fast growing corporate sector.

To sustain such a supply will require massive and market sensitive investments in building up a service export base without starving the growing need for skilled services in the domestic market.



GOAL FOUR

To have a nation of healthy citizens

Achieving economic prosperity goes hand in hand with ensuring a healthy population. Over the last 35 years, there has been a substantial improvement in the health status of our people. Life Expectancy at birth has increased, Crude Death Rate (CDR) has declined, and Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has fallen sharply. Despite these improvements, much still remains to be done to improve the health of our population. Bangladesh has one of the lowest physician-population, physician-nurse and nurse/midwife-population ratios in the region. Even to reach Sri Lanka's present health standards, Bangladesh will need to double the number of physicians and quadruple the number of nurses per hundred thousand population. Mortality rates, especially infant and maternal mortality, continue to be unacceptably high. The quality of life of the general population is still very low and poverty itself is a major cause of many common diseases. Low calorie intake continues to result in malnutrition, particularly in women and children. Diarrhoeal diseases are still a major killer among children despite being easily treatable. Communicable diseases that are preventable still dominate the top ten causes of morbidity.

The most serious problem facing the country is the increasing disparity in the quality of healthcare available to the affluent compared to the less fortunate and the resourceless. The elite of Bangladesh enjoy access to advanced healthcare abroad and in the more modern private facilities being set up in Bangladesh. The private sector is already outpacing the government in the provision of sophisticated modalities of diagnosis and therapy, such as CT Scans, MRI Scans, Endoscopy Units, etc. This trend will continue into the future and the net result of such a process will be the emergence of major inequities in not just healthcare but the life chances which are available to the elite and the less fortunate, particularly those living in the rural areas. The key challenge before us, therefore, is to find ways to provide enhanced quality healthcare services for the resourceless. Given the extreme resource constraints relative to their needs these services will largely have to be provided by the state. This will necessitate establishing a public healthcare system that is targeted to the resourceless. Such a system will be decentralised, flexible and innovative and will be capable of making the best use of IT-based health management information systems. At the same time, the receivers of healthcare services will have to be proactively involved in ensuring that the healthcare system is responsive to their needs so as to guide the system to meet new healthcare challenges as they emerge. The latter will require a nurturing of a political climate wherein the rights of the poor and the under-privileged are consistently upheld and

fought for. The following illustrates some aspects of a healthy nation that we should aspire towards by 2021.

4.1 A replacement level of fertility rate

Despite remarkable achievements in lowering total fertility rates over the last 30 years, the country's population is still growing at a pace that could aggravate poverty levels despite higher levels of economic growth. Current UN projections predict reaching a replacement level of fertility by 2025, or even before that, if enough emphasis is given on, inter alia, women's education, and also on raising men's awareness as regards the reproductive issues. Other emerging factors over the next 15 years may help to accelerate this decline in fertility. For example, rapid urban growth, shifts in the agricultural structure, economic prosperity, better access to education and healthcare, and women's employment will affect the value of children and the cost of raising them.

In addition to addressing the problem of achieving replacement level of fertility and population stabilisation, Bangladesh will confront critical demographic challenges in the years to come arising out of the current population momentum. Thus, achieving a replacement level of fertility would still mean that by 2021 there will be more than 180 million people in Bangladesh, making it the most densely populated country (other than tiny city states) in the world. To meet such a challenge, large investments will be made in the education of mothers' and on children's health. More emphasis will be put on informed choice by women, and on enhancing their reproductive rights.

4.2 Survival and healthy development of all children

The health of a nation depends on the health of its children and their mothers. With today's knowledge and technology the vast number of current annual deaths of newborns and mothers in Bangladesh can be prevented. By 2021 there will be no excuse for us for not being able to provide effective, affordable and responsive care to newborns and mothers in order to reduce neo-natal and maternal mortality in line with today's middle-income Asian countries such as Malaysia. Community level health services across the country will have to improve maternal health and nutrition, and offer pre-natal and post-natal care to mothers in all districts. All births will preferably take place in birth centres or at home with trained birth attendants. These attendants will be able to make referrals to the nearest health centres in case of emergencies including the need for blood transfusions. Community level training of local women to take care of sick newborns will be provided.

The incidence of death among children because of accidents

Community level health services across the country will have to improve maternal health and nutrition, and offer pre-natal and post-natal care to mothers in all districts. All births will preferably take place in birth centres or at home with trained birth attendants.

(drowning being the predominant cause), is very high in Bangladesh. Violence against children is also very common. Children also die slowly from malnutrition and due to poor public health system. Measures to address these via better education of mothers and children and an efficient and accountable public health system will be in place. Men's awareness as regards their responsibility in all these aspects will be raised through targeted programmes.

4.3 Improved health and well-being of women

Women's relative lack of access to education and basic healthcare contributes to increased maternal mortality and ill health of women. Gender discrimination and gender-related violence particularly leaves women vulnerable to diseases, disability and death. Nurturing a social movement that addresses the reduction of maternal mortality by promoting woman's reproductive rights, and that enhances women's self esteem and status will be a priority. Investment in women's education and healthcare over the next five years will be given high priority. Innovative approaches to devise cost-effective ways to provide healthcare services to all women will have to be developed. To this effect, on-line information regarding women's nutrition and reproductive health issues that could spare women from repeated and frequent childbearing will be made widely available, especially to adolescent girls and boys, via IT-based health kiosks, first in urban areas, and then across the country. Call centres manned by reproductive health professionals will also allow women and adolescents to seek information and advice on socially taboo topics without having to disclose their identities. Replication of existing innovative attempts at setting up "telecentres" will be pursued to provide access to internet-based information to all families in Bangladesh. Along with access to information, an elaborate scheme will be designed for healthcare of disadvantaged women. This scheme will be built on a partnership between public and private sectors and NGOs.

4.4 Universal access to basic healthcare and quality services

We understand that to achieve equity in health outcomes equity in terms of access to health services needs to be ensured first. A basic set of essential quality healthcare services will be made accessible to the entire population. Such services will be a substantial improvement on those currently provided by the government at the Union level through Health and Family Welfare Centres (HFWC). A nation-wide health insurance policy with innovative GO-NGO partnership will be put into service. Whilst the primary responsibility for ensuring adequate funds for this will lie with the state, the delivery system of these services (with limited financial liability) will largely be shared by private service providers, NGOs, and other community-based autonomous enterprises, thereby offering a tiered system of healthcare which offers different levels of treatment at commensurate prices. In this context, linkage of such services with micro-credit programmes will be explored. Public accountability of such basic health services

will be ensured through local government institutions as well as citizen's advocacy and activism. There will also be a wide use of telemedicine and e-medicine, especially in the case of complex diseases, whereby a person in a remote village will be able to access via the internet the best medical advice from either a doctor in Dhaka or a specialist sitting in Singapore or Thailand. The rural health infrastructure will be geared to make this service available to the rural people.

4.5 Better nutritional status of mothers and children

In addition to being one of the causes of high maternal and child mortality, malnutrition places heavy costs on the healthcare system through excess morbidity, increased premature delivery, and elevated risks of other diseases. The economic consequences of Bangladesh's malnutrition problem are profound, resulting in lost productivity and reduced intellectual and learning capacity. A national scheme of regular visits by health service providers to new-born babies to monitor their growth and suggest appropriate measures to parents will be put in place. In addition to improved access to basic healthcare services, better dietary intake and women's education will ensure that malnutrition among children is reduced to levels found in East Asian countries. A mandated national level school feeding programme will help to address some of the dietary deficiencies in school-going children. The state will mobilise the funds and the local community will oversee the implementation. Mother's education on the importance of nursing their babies (both breast feeding and complementary feeding of babies) and in food preparation will help to address malnutrition more broadly among the wider population.

4.6 Adoption and maintenance of healthy lifestyles

An overwhelming proportion of illness among the people of the country is due to communicable diseases. Poor nutrition and sanitation foster the spread of infectious diseases – pneumonia, dysentery, diarrhoea, measles, etc. – and parasitic diseases such as malaria, filariasis, and helminthiasis – which are responsible for widespread illness and numerous deaths. Children bear the greatest burden of these communicable diseases. Most of those affected come from impoverished settings where they are most likely to be malnourished and least likely to know about life-saving interventions, where to find them, or have the means to obtain them. An effective health education for the wider public along with an improved basic health service will contribute towards a healthy population. Physical exercise in schools will be emphasised, as will be education on communicable diseases and healthy lifestyle.

There is also an increased prevalence of diseases of affluence or life style along with diseases of poverty. Rising levels of income and sedentary lifestyles are increasingly raising the incidence of food-related non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. Both the print and electronic media will begin to play an active role in raising consumer awareness on how to maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle, particularly for the younger people and children. The pressures of an increased size population on

food production are likely to increase the chances of food adulteration, which will introduce new diseases such as cancer, intestinal and respiratory diseases. Increased consumer awareness and government regulation regarding food adulteration will have to be implemented in the short term, which in turn will act as a preventative measure against production and sale of poor quality food products that are deleterious to our health. Over time, more organic food products will have to be available at affordable prices to offer better food choices. To that effect, low-cost innovative agricultural methods will be put in place for the large scale production and marketing of organic food products (see Goal Three, target 3.1).

4.7 Universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation towards improved public health

By 2021, we envision a situation where access to clean water and sanitation will no longer remain a luxury. To this end, the key strategy will be to ensure efficient public health management which can gradually provide access to piped water, a well-maintained functioning sewerage system, environmentally-sound hospitals and industrial waste disposal, etc. These efforts will draw upon the collaborative efforts of the engineers, nutritionists, environment specialists and educators in the country along with local government bodies and community members. For example, efforts are needed to help communities gain access to geological and engineering skills that can provide a supply of water, maintain it and monitor its quality. Communities and local government structures need to be able to take up national policies and translate them into practical, long-term strategies to ensure that they have, and can sustain, a supply of safe water, systems for monitoring water quality, access to safe disposal of excreta, and on-going education of both the young and old on how to ensure good hygiene practices. Improving public health will have a bigger impact on health indicators such as infant mortality and diseases than improving hospital care. Reinforcing the public health system will also help achieve social equity in healthcare for the poor people who cannot afford private health services.

4.8 Decentralisation and community involvement to improve overall health services

The provision of equitable, efficient and good quality healthcare services needs an administrative and financial decentralisation of the health services department, while ensuring community involvement in formulating and implementing healthcare programmes and reforms. Such a system involves the entire community, both women and men, in

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identifying their own health problems, as well as those of their babies. The community will be mobilised towards a more effective health education as also the prevention and control of diseases that originate in the environment. The community will have the greatest interest in improving the conditions that affect them and their children. Mechanisms will be put in place for community members to demand the resources from their local government bodies to operate a health service in which the people themselves will play the dominant role and of which they will be the chief beneficiaries. All infrastructure, health service provider development, training, distribution, and production of drugs and equipment must be coordinated to achieve this, and not in reverse as is the present case. Only thus can a cost effective, humane and accountable health service be provided that is funded and operated by the local bodies with the technical assistance of the health professionals. Structural changes in health systems will be necessary to support such a community involvement process in the health sector. These changes include decentralisation of planning, management, and budgeting of health sector expenditure, and will be implemented with fast speed in the shortest possible time.

4.9 A rigorous medical education system

Special emphasis will have to be placed, along with public health, on medical education, nursing, and medical research if we are to bring a sustained level of quality healthcare to our people. This would require an institutional development plan for the improvement of teaching of basic sciences and pre-medical education (see also Goal Five). Medical training will have to be made more rigorous based on a curriculum that emphasizes values needed to be a good physician. Medical graduates will not only be trained in basic medical sciences and clinical medicine but also other subjects necessary for medical practice including medical ethics, legal medicine, disease prevention, healthcare delivery, communicating skills and research methodology. Emphasis will also be given on teaching medical students how to maintain the fine balance between the scientific principles of medicine and the art of healing when dealing with patients. Medical education will continue after the ten to twelve years of formal studies and examinations as part of Continuing Medical Education (CME). Physicians will be required to attend meetings, courses and training programmes continuously throughout their careers to keep abreast of current developments. Medical colleges will be encouraged to concentrate on research and tertiary healthcare along with medical education. Better use of existing facilities and establishment of new ones will be made with a view to training nurses, paramedics, health technicians, and birth attendants and community health workers. Appropriate incentives will be put in place for doctors and health workers to stay and provide service in rural areas. An appropriately designed referral system will be in place.



GOAL FIVE

To develop a skilled and creative human resource

In the interest of building an efficient system of governance and a more dynamic economy by 2021, investing in the right type of education will be crucial. Having an information and knowledge-based population of some 180 million by 2021 will provide Bangladesh with an enormous asset base of semi-skilled, skilled and vocationally trained workers who can service fast growing domestic market as well as various emerging niche markets at home and abroad.

A creative system of education must be in place to develop the minds that will create knowledge, reinvigorate our economy, make further improvements in our schools, revitalise our communities and value system, help our industry develop new products, make business operations run more profitably, restructure government agencies to become more effective and less encumbered, and replace old, ineffective methods and systems with new, more workable ones. Children from both urban and rural areas will have to have access to such a system. Therefore, we will aspire to achieve the following targets to help create an educated population and a skilled workforce by 2021.

5.1 Universal access to education up to the secondary level

By 2021 it should be possible to provide a quality primary (eight years) and secondary (four years) education to every child (twelve years in total). Those who would like to pursue vocational education will do so after the primary level (see 5.5 for more). No child will be left outside the learning system irrespective of family income levels, gender, religion, ethnicity or disabilities. Towards this, the Secondary Stipend Programme will be expanded gradually to include boys along with girls.

At present the number of pupils per teacher in Bangladesh at the primary level is almost three times that of Sri Lanka. Both quantity and quality aspects of teaching will be addressed to radically improve the situation by 2021. The key to achieving this goal is to guarantee the presence of qualified and motivated teachers and adequate teaching-learning facilities in every school and to ensure that each school is managed with accountability regarding its performance. A workable approach towards reaching the goal will be to encourage each institution to develop a "quality assurance plan" and provide necessary resources to schools which will be invested with autonomy and accountability to run their own institutions. An attractive compensation package for teachers will be designed with appropriate incentives for continuous professional upgradation.

5.2 An integrated/unified education system

A segmented education system (e.g. Bangla medium, English medium, Madrasah system) creates a segmented population where different sections of the society are not able to relate or in many cases, communicate with each other. To pre-empt the emergence of a divided country along education lines, and at the same time improve the quality of education, we need to think about an integrated/unified system of education where a set of core knowledge and competencies are acquired by all students at the primary level, along with choices for additional/complementary learning options.

Such a system has to be put in place in the shortest possible time well before 2021. This will involve having a common core curricular content and a set of objectives (for mandatory subjects, such as Bangla, English, Math, Science, Civic studies, etc.) with choices allowed for additional content and objectives including elective subjects. Students can be enrolled in different institutions, including madrasas and English-medium schools, and prepare for different national and international certificate examinations, but all must fulfil the requirements of the core curriculum. Following this, students will have wider choice to pursue education at the secondary level. Specialisation will only occur at the tertiary level. A goal of bilingualism – high level of proficiency both in Bangla and English – will be set for the secondary education system; necessary measures will be taken to attract and support qualified English teachers in secondary schools. The goal for primary education will be to build a strong foundation of literacy and numeracy and basic science, especially with the limited contact hours in more than 90 per cent of the primary schools running in two shifts.

5.3 Necessary infrastructure to ensure quality of education at all levels

An integrated/unified education system would have to be supported by a set of minimum facilities to ensure that all schools, whether of public or privately funded, are able to offer similar standards of education. For example, to ensure that the core curriculum is taught well, similar human resources will have to be available across educational institutions. In the same way, for students to receive an equal understanding of science-based subjects, all schools will require comparable facilities including class rooms, laboratories, computers and libraries.

At the tertiary level, special attention will be given to improving and protecting quality standards in colleges under the National University (NU), where 80 per cent of the tertiary level students are enrolled. Quality criteria and legal provisions will be applied seriously and systematically to private universities and in approving new ones. An accreditation mechanism for private and public universities will be established to assess and promote academic quality. The guarantee of meeting essential quality criteria must be a pre-requisite for expansion or approval of new institutions.

5.4 Analytical and creative thinking by our youth, supported by a core set of values

The changing nature of an internationally competitive workplace, as it becomes

increasingly specialised, demanding, and hi-tech, will necessitate having a workforce with excellent analytical and creative thinking capabilities. Special emphasis will be given to teaching methods that sharpen these qualities in our students at all levels. Currently education in Bangladesh revolves around blind memorisation of study materials. Students have, as a result, a strong dependence on coaching centres, private tutors, and guidebooks that free them from having to think for themselves. By 2021 the curriculum, particularly the examination system, will be free from such rote memorisation so that no student will buy a guidebook or hire a private tutor. A programme of research, trial and professional capacity building in education assessment and examination will be initiated in the Curriculum and Textbook Board, and Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Examination.

The education system will also instil a core set of values in our youths on embracing a positive attitude towards life based on honesty, sincerity and generosity with which to capitalise on the good (e.g. new opportunities, etc.) and to shun the bad (drugs, unsafe sex, etc.) of an increasingly globalised culture. Further, the education system will aim to educate our children on the importance of embracing our cultural, religious and ethnic diversity and to be proud of our national identity and cultural heritage.

5.5 Vocational training for secondary school graduates

By 2021, an overwhelming portion of our population will consist of youth. Equipping them with skills so that they can be more employable (including as small entrepreneurs) will be one of our priorities. As part of a human resource development policy clear career paths will be devised for different types of graduates. For example, vocational training in various emerging trades that are in high demand by global companies such as accounting and financial services, graphic design, call centres, animation, and so on, could be provided to secondary and higher secondary school graduates via the various polytechnic institutes that already exist. Other training institutes could prepare students for senior management or engineering positions in the commercial and service sectors. Advanced Technology Centres can help develop skilled workers required by emerging industries, especially in the hi-tech area. A globally recognised certification system will be important whereby graduates will have the choice to decide the level of skills they want to acquire semi-skilled vs. skilled; advanced skill/supervisor level vs. advanced skill/management level. Career placement or job matching will be an essential component of the services offered by these vocational training institutions. These objectives can be achieved only

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with substantial authority for decision-making at the institutional level. Individual institutions will be able to assess market needs and demands for skills, involve potential employers in planning curricula, and generate resources for the institution by selling services and products from their workshops. Institutions will thus give their graduates hands-on experience and ensure that they can survive in the marketplace.

5.6 Need-based free tertiary education for the best students

Our goal by 2021 will be to establish a meritocracy. To that end, every intelligent child irrespective of income, ethnic or religious background will be provided with an opportunity to access a high-quality education up to the tertiary level. A system of scholarships and financial support (through loans and grants) will be initiated to ensure that talent is nurtured equitably and no one with strong academic potential is deprived of the opportunity for higher education. Targeted scholarships that reward merit will be widely implemented through need-based scholarship programmes. Commitments will be made by both public and private universities to offer free education and stipends to all the country's top-performing students at the Higher Secondary Level. Government subsidies to educational institutions will be provided to achieve this target. Providing tertiary education to the best students is a necessary condition for generating academic centres of excellence which will act as breeding grounds for the country's future scholars and leaders.

5.7 Increased opportunities for research

Research and education are very closely related. Presently the majority of universities in Bangladesh are purely undergraduate institutions. By 2021 every University will have a graduate programme that offers research-based Masters and Ph.D. degrees. Some of this research will be oriented towards fields that are directly pertinent to Bangladesh. At the moment, there is also no opportunity for a talented student to study and engage in research in a pure science subject beyond the undergraduate level. These bright students are being diverted from science to largely market-oriented careers. By 2021 there will exist sufficient research institutions so that a bright student can pursue higher education in a pure science subject without worrying about their future employment. A special programme managed by a University Research Council comprising respected academics from different disciplines, under the auspices of the University Grants Commission (UGC) and with a substantial allocation of funds, will be initiated in order to encourage and support basic and applied post-graduate research in universities. These will be centres of excellence which will work closely with the private sector. These centres will also be capable to attract talents from outside. Appropriate initiatives will be taken to take advantage of the Millennium Science Initiative (MSI) which offers assistance to developing countries to foster innovative research, educate and train future generation of scientists and engineers and to develop linkages with educational and research institutions, private sector and the global scientific community.

5.8 A decentralised education system and effective education governance

We will create an educational environment where students as well as teachers can concentrate on education without being held hostage to party politics if we aspire to establish an internationally competitive education system by 2021. This is not to suggest that students and teachers will not express themselves on important national or international political issues or exercise their franchise. Political parties will, therefore, have to cease their current practice of patronising students committed exclusively to capturing educational institutions through violence and will commit themselves to the depoliticisation of these institutions. High level appointments in our public institutions as well as the process of teachers' recruitments and career advancement will be made exclusively on merit and delinked from political identities.

Decentralisation of the education system will be important to instil accountability in teachers to the local community. To that effect, local education boards (as exists in other countries such as India) will be set up which will have full autonomy and the authority to recruit and train teachers, supervise and monitor teacher performance, and oversee community involvement in the management of schools. Politicians such as the local Members of the Parliament (MP) will not be allowed to become members of the Governing Board or Managing Committee of schools and colleges. Rather local community members and respected personalities along with parents will be part of school management committees. Peer review and students evaluations will be the basis for teacher promotion and tenure, rather than a teacher's political identity. As a policy, educational institutions of all types, receiving public financial subvention and salary support for personnel, will be encouraged to sign learning outcome-based performance contracts and allowed to manage their own affairs with transparency and accountability to their respective communities, as long as they meet the performance criteria. Government subvention and support will be based on clearly established learning outcomes rather than only compliance with procedures and rules. Institutions living up to the agreed criteria and outcome measures will qualify for progressively greater autonomy.

In order to develop a longer term perspective and guide the development of the nation's education system and to avert the custom of setting up an Education Commission by every regime and then failing to follow up on the recommendations, a permanent National Commission on Education will be established. It will be composed of well-respected representatives of the major stakeholders civil society, the academic community, and the government education establishment answerable directly to the national parliament. The Commission will be a statutory body with functions and status specified in a national education law. It will have a budget and a secretariat with technical capacity for policy review and evaluation of the performance of the education system. The Commission will provide an overall report on the national education system and on specific aspects or sub-sectors of the system in alternate years.

5.9 Computer literacy for all

Support will be given to use advances in digital and other communication technologies to

improve quality of education and extend the reach of education services. Broadband internet connectivity will be established in all tertiary and progressively in other types of institutions at a highly subsidised price, which will be incorporated in regulatory provisions for public and private service providers. ICT-based and distance-mode education through Open University programmes and extension programmes of universities and colleges will be designed to provide extensive opportunities for higher education, professional upgrading and pursuit of personal development. A special effort will be made to provide computer education to the resourceless, particularly in the rural areas.

5.10 Gender balance at all levels of education

By 2021 women will have the same level of access to education, at all levels, as their male counterparts. Women's right to education will be seen as a human right. This is especially pertinent in view of the fact that women's education positively impacts on health and nutrition outcomes. Furthermore, many of the future jobs in the global market will be women-oriented. For example, women are better placed in the care-giving industry such as primary education, hospitals (as nurses), old-age homes (as care-givers), and child-care centres, as well as in the garment making and the assembled electronics industry. A gender-responsive curriculum is important in this context. Joining the ranks of a middle-income country (see Goal Three) cannot be fulfilled without allowing equal female participation in the workforce. In this respect, efforts will be in place to provide the right environment (effective law and order situation, security, freedom of mobility, etc.) and facilities (safe transport to schools and universities, adequate housing facilities, etc.) to female students in order for them to complete their education up to the tertiary level.

5.11 A culture of Corporate Social Responsibility for increased investment in education

A skilled and creative workforce will form the backbone of a vibrant corporate sector. In return we can expect large businesses to pay back their local communities by establishing educational institutions of the highest calibre across Bangladesh. Such a set-up will be a win-win situation for both the corporations and the local communities. Even small and medium level businesses could participate in the initiative. The goodwill firms can generate from acts of social responsibility may, in fact, be worth far more to the businesses than the direct financial contributions they make. Appropriate tax incentives will be considered for contributions made by private companies and individuals in support of education.

Joining the ranks of a middle-income country (see Goal Three) cannot be fulfilled without allowing equal female participation in the workforce. In this respect, efforts will be in place to provide the right environment and facilities to female students

5.12 Financing public education

For Bangladesh, no other sector of national development can claim a higher priority than education. The proportion of GNP devoted to education in the public sector will be increased from around two per cent at present to around 5 per cent, (which would still be below the average for developing countries). The proportion of the government budget devoted to education will be doubled within the next decade from the present level of around 15 per cent. A medium term budgetary framework (3 to 5 years) will be developed for both development and recurrent expenditures in education in order to achieve the target for ensuring adequate resources for education.

The effectiveness and cost-benefits of high transfer payments (such as stipends and free tuition) will be critically assessed in terms of their impact on equity in participation, equality of education and learning performance of students. Adequate resource will be made available for the essential quality inputs for the education system such as qualified and motivated teachers, learning materials and aids, and physical facilities. Criteria for optimal allocation and utilisation of resources will be developed and applied in sub-sectors and programmes of education and individual institutions. Public subvention and incentives to educational institutions will be linked to commitment and fulfilment of agreed performance criteria and targets; greater autonomy and control of resources will be offered to institutions that prove their capability to use resources effectively.



GOAL SIX

To become a globally integrated regional economic and commercial hub

Bangladesh's strategic geographical location presents it with a unique opportunity to become a regional economic and commercial hub by 2021. Two of our neighbouring countries, India and China, will be the world's largest and second largest markets in the near future. This should allow us to attract global companies to use Bangladesh as a base to manufacture, and take advantage of our location to export goods and services to these countries. When formulating off-shoring plans, companies take into account low labour costs as well as the prospects of establishing a future sales foothold in a low-cost country. By 2021 Bangladesh will have two characteristics that will be crucial to attracting companies with off-shoring plans: a large base of relatively low cost labour and a huge market of some 170-180 million people within the country, and more than two billion people within the region to whom we will have market access. As India and China move up the value chain and labour shortages appear, opportunities will be created for Bangladesh to secure new areas of business. Linking with these countries via a multi-modal communications system will allow us to export high value specialised products and services to their markets.

The challenge before us is to understand and develop the type of policies, infrastructure, financial and capital markets and human resources needed to make Bangladesh the first choice of hard-nosed investors and traders. We need to make our laws, institutions, bureaucracy, financial system, travel and transportation facilities, most friendly to the movement of people, investments, goods and service in and out of Bangladesh. The following are some ideas which will equip us to respond to the challenge.

6.1 Develop a clear marketing strategy to attract foreign investment

We need well-functioning, well-funded industry associations to formulate strategies for attracting foreign investment, counter negative perceptions, catalyse action at the government level (including appropriate incentive measures that take into account both cost to the exchequer and the potential benefits) and at the industry level (quality control, skill upgradation, technological restructuring, better management) and lobby the government to reduce bureaucratic interventions and improve regulatory competitiveness. We would have to identify emerging areas of business

such as outsourcing of shared services (e.g. in IT, finance, human resources, etc.), data entry/medical transcription, animation, and so forth. Once we are able to develop the appropriately skilled labour and ensure a corruption and hassle free investment climate, Bangladesh will have to sell itself on its strengths to attract these businesses.

6.2 Build a mega port along Chittagong coastline

To establish Bangladesh as a regional trade hub, a mega port along the Chittagong coastline serving Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Eastern India, Myanmar, and South-Western China will be up and running by 2021. With an internationally competitive vessel turnaround time (e.g. the one-day standard of more efficient ports), lower handling charges than those in the region (such as Bangkok and Sri Lanka), quick customs clearing (in line with other countries such as Malaysia, of 3 days or less, instead of the current 11.7 days) this port should be known as the *port of call* for traders across the region.

Geographically Bangladesh is strategically located to provide access to international shipping to the region. We will start making appropriate preparations, in consultation with these countries, to create facilities for access. We will show them the benefits accruing to them by opening up their access to the sea routes through Bangladesh, and doing business with Bangladesh. This will require resolving formidable political and technical issues. We would have to start the groundwork that is needed to initiate the building of this mega port now to signal our commitment to the idea to our neighbours.

6.3 Build a super highway connecting the mega port with neighbouring countries

We will capitalise on the current proposal on the table to build a highway network to connect the SAARC countries, and offer to build highways connecting Nepal, Bhutan, Eastern India with Bangladesh and onward to Myanmar, South Western China and Thailand, through the Asian Highway and Railway networks. Such highway and railway networks would serve our purpose by making the use of the mega port even more attractive. We will make sure that our highway network extends southwards to Cox's Bazaar, so that it can be further connected with Myanmar, Thailand, and China through a southern route.

6.4 Establish an international airport in close proximity to the mega port

The mega port will be supported by an international airport in its proximity. With appropriate aircraft servicing facilities and hotels and accommodation, this airport will have the potentiality to become a regional airline hub. It will have the advantage of cutting distances to many Asian cities such as Tokyo, Osaka, Beijing, Shanghai, etc. and taking off the pressure from other SAARC airports.

With borders opening up, highways criss-crossing the region, businesses growing, we can create mutual trust among our neighbours, leading to an enabling political climate to engage in preparing a regional water management plan in conjunction with the plan for regional production and distribution of electricity.

6.5 Develop and expand port facilities at Mongla

As part of the highway network, we shall also link up Mongla port so that an alternate Western corridor is created to transport goods to and from Nepal, Bhutan and the eastern part of India. This will mean that current port facilities at Mongla will have to be substantially upgraded and expanded.

6.6 Develop cyber parks to boost an ICT driven service sector

The contribution of the ICT sector can be viewed at two levels, direct and indirect. The direct effect will be through employment, income and export earnings from ICT. The indirect effect will be through increased transparency of institutions, enhanced productivity, competitiveness and growth of other sectors on account of IT diffusion, emergence of altogether new services enabled by ICT and spillovers. An improved ICT infrastructure will have to be put in place to derive the ICT-related economic benefits. Further, to build a niche in the emerging information-based markets, we will have in place state-of-the-art cyberparks sustained by an internationally competitive infrastructure. These parks will have enhanced security (both physical and digital), the right regulatory framework, access to uninterrupted power supply, and so on.

6.7 Ensure uninterrupted power supply all over the country

Access to reliable, reasonably priced energy, particularly by industry, agriculture and the commercial sector is an important precondition for any type of investment, domestic or foreign. The current situation of supply shortages of power must change if we are to attract foreign investment at levels that would transform Bangladesh into a commercial hub by 2021. In this respect, substantial investment in this sector will be made to install around 5000 megawatt of new generating units, preferably in the western part of the country and drill at least five production wells and at least two exploration wells annually with the aim to cover the whole country by 2021. Measures will be taken to unbundle the power sector so that the distribution is handled by competitively oriented public limited companies.

6.8 Integrate into a regional energy market

With borders opening up, highways criss-crossing the region, businesses growing, we can create mutual trust among our neighbours, leading to an enabling political climate to engage in preparing a regional water management plan in conjunction with the plan for

regional production and distribution of electricity. This region has an enormous capacity to produce hydro-electricity. Given the necessary political will Bangladesh can meet her ever-growing electricity needs from a mutually beneficial arrangement with Nepal, Bhutan and India which can be connected through a regional electricity grid. Necessary steps to that effect will be undertaken immediately.

6.9 Promote the deepening and broadening of capital markets

To develop into a regional trading hub, we will provide support to the trading companies with a wide range of financial and capital market instruments. Smaller trading companies commonly experience difficulties in securing traditional bank financing due to their weak business asset structure. We shall provide easy access to sources of capital (e.g. debt and equity capital) to help them develop their companies and anchor them in Bangladesh. A deepened and broadened capital market (the Dhaka and Chittagong Stock Exchanges) and a relatively larger size of capital (i.e. if we become a middle-income country) will help make Bangladesh the preferred location to raise funds by these trading companies for business development.

In recent years, exchanges have increasingly been used as platforms for derivatives trading because they provide greater price transparency and better risk management. Establishing a derivative exchange market (perhaps as a joint venture with other regional ones such as the Joint Asian Derivative Exchange located in Singapore) will help develop a vibrant commodity derivative market. Such trading could be electronic, thereby incurring no storage fees and making each transaction transparent. Developing our capital markets will in turn develop local expertise in the area of finance, and thus eventually open up opportunities to access business process outsourcing markets in financial services.

6.10 Train a suitable workforce

Both the quality and quantity of graduates will be improved, especially in their English proficiency. Offering training in foreign languages (e.g. Chinese, Korean, Japanese, etc.) will also be an important part of identifying new markets in voice-based Business Process Outsourcing. The supply of management capacity is also crucial. To that effect training different types of workers (skilled vs. semi-skilled; advanced skills/supervisors vs. advanced skills/managers) will be a key part of our vision on how to offer the necessary workforce upon which to establish Bangladesh as a regional industrial and commercial hub (see Goal Five for details). Further, to help develop our capital markets, we shall develop a pool of trading professionals. The challenge will be to educate a new breed of individuals with an entrepreneurial spirit and the ability to take risks.

6.11 More effective regional integration of Bangladesh economy

By 2021 Bangladesh will be an integral part of a thriving South-Asian economy. Towards this, the SAFTA will be effectively implemented with appropriate policies that

provide preferential market access, encourage regional cumulation in terms of rules of origin and provide incentives for intra-regional investment flow. Guaranteed buy back schemes and joint-ventures targeting global markets will be in place. An expanding SAFTA will have close economic linkage with other RTAs such as ASEAN. Economic cooperation will gradually expand from goods, to encompass trade in services, and capital. An effective BIMSTEC will open up access to ASEAN markets. The SAFTA will have graduated into a Customs Union by 2021. Bangladesh's South-South exports will constitute a substantial proportion of her global exports.

GOAL SEVEN

To be environmentally sustainable

Over the next 15 years, an increased size of the population, greater urbanisation and economic growth will present environmental challenges such as increased levels of soil degradation and industrial wastewater, a rise in domestic sewage and hazardous wastes, and a depletion of our water and coastal resources. Increased levels of air and water pollution and the loss of natural habitats primarily due to deforestation and encroachment of wetlands will also emerge as some of the potential negative environmental consequences of Bangladesh's growth over the coming years. Failing to take note of these environmental consequences and to take the necessary measures to counter them will compromise our vision of sustained prosperity and good health for all. Furthermore, we will have failed our next generation by eroding the resource base they will inherit. A strategy for better management of our environment will be based on collaborative efforts by a determined government, conscious citizens and responsible businesses. Some thoughts on what would be some important environmental targets for us to achieve are presented below.

7.1 Effective urban planning

By 2021, the urban population is expected to double in size, thereby increasing the population density in the cities, especially in Dhaka, to unprecedented levels. This eventual demographic outcome will pose serious challenges for our urban planners and the environment. A two-pronged strategy will be in place. Firstly, we will develop and implement a plan on how we want Dhaka to develop over the next ten years. This plan will be based on participatory planning with a clear understanding of the roles of the politicians, the government, corporations, NGOs and last but not least, the citizens of Dhaka in implementing the plan. Secondly, we will ensure the creation of urban centres or "compact towns" in the vicinity of the specialised commercial zones (see Goals Three and Six) across the country to ease the pressures on Dhaka. The high rates of urbanisation across the country that will ensue will require a commensurate expansion of services via effective urban planning outside Dhaka city. Essential to a well-managed urbanisation process is effective urban governance, which will be achieved through decentralised urban local governments. Supporting these local government bodies will be private sector institutions and NGOs/CBOs involved in the local delivery of urban public and private goods such as adequate housing, transport, utility, health services and education facilities.

7.2 Reduced air pollution

The government will have to take a tough stance in reducing outdoor air pollution in the case of the numerous urban centres and mega cities that will emerge by 2021. Most of this pollution is from vehicular sources. The government will consider actions to improve the overall traffic management of the big cities, introduce a reliable and efficient city transport system, remove polluting industries from city limits, and phase out leaded gasoline, improve diesel quality and stop open air burning of fuels. There will be a legal provision to enforce closure of polluting industries that fail to meet environmental regulations. The above policies will be implemented in the short term to reduce the amount of lead, dust and carbon monoxide. The government and citizens will jointly own these initiatives to improve the quality of air. A longer-term policy will rest on the government and private businesses to build an elevated rail system or to introduce electric buses, at least in Dhaka, which is likely to be the most congested mega-city in the region by 2021. A well-functioning public transport system in the urban centres will lessen the number of new motorised vehicles on the streets.

Introducing ways to improve indoor air pollution will also be a priority. Increased awareness of the sources of indoor air pollution will be part of a short-term strategy while over time providing access to piped gas/biogas supply to as many households as possible will help to reduce indoor air pollution.

7.3 Reduced water pollution

Cleaning up rivers in terms of both pollutants and encroachment will constitute a large part of the government's environment-saving drive over the next few years. The ground water table of Dhaka is fast depleting and it would be necessary for the city to find alternative sources of water. Providing access to clean water, especially drinking water, will be a key challenge given that the pressures of increased population, agricultural and industrial activity will affect water quality far more adversely than presently seen. The challenge of reducing arsenic levels will be adequately addressed. As an alternative to ground water, surface water treatment facilities (via making use of cheaper water treatment technologies) will become impossible unless we improve the surface water quality in our river system. Ensuring the availability of surface water flows and adopting ways to harvest and preserve rainwater will be two key policies to feature in the National Water Plan.

The tendency to encroach on rivers, unless abated, is likely to increase in an unprecedented manner given a growing population and increased industrialisation. Efficient management of *khas* land, or land

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zoning that allows for building adequate shelter for an increasingly urbanised population as well as for allowing industrial activity will help to pre-empt such encroachment. To that effect, large-scale low cost housing (e.g. project housing) can be made available to a cross-section of people. However, such projects should be built around socially integrated communities if they are not to degenerate into unliveable urban slums. Particular attention will be given to the construction of decent and secure housing for women workers in metropolitan centres. A land leasing policy for industrial activity will be in place such that industries that follow environmental standards are given access to *khas* land. The same environmental standards and regulations will be applicable for all, including the EPZs and any other specialised economic zones that may emerge over the next years (see Goal Three).

7.4 Conservation of designated wetlands to maintain ecosystem balance

On-going siltation and flood control interventions (e.g. embankments, sluice gates, etc.) have endangered both our vast network of wetlands as well as their associated fisheries. Systematic conservation and judicious use of wetlands will thus be crucial over the coming years. To that effect, pond aquaculture will continue to expand along with environmentally sound management of open water and marine fisheries. Appropriate zoning of land under agriculture and aquaculture will be carried out to address the attendant concerns. It is also important that we enforce laws to stop continuous conversion of wetlands into agricultural, industrial and residential uses.

7.5 Strengthened regional water management

Cooperation with our neighbouring countries in identifying mutually beneficial ways to manage water, especially floodwater, will be ensured. For example, Bangladesh must play its due part to encourage the building of the proposed dams and reservoirs in India and Nepal needed to generate hydro-power since there will be an added beneficial impact for Bangladesh in flood moderation and augmentation of downstream water flows in the dry season. The government should immediately engage in negotiations with India, Nepal and Bhutan to ensure that the current water flows are maintained in our river system in future years. Any delay in such negotiation will seriously jeopardise our position in terms of maintaining the required water flows in the rivers. Our goal will be to build a regional water authority (such as the Mekong Basin Authority) to plan the long term use of the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna basin on a mutually beneficial basis.

7.6 Retention and improvement of soil fertility

The need to feed more mouths from a dwindling amount of agricultural land will place pressure to accelerate and sustain crop productivity growth over the next 15 years. Guarding against soil depletion as crop productivity is raised will be a key environmental challenge. To that effect a two-pronged strategy will be in place: one, training of farmers on how to better manage nutrients while raising crop productivity;

and two, increased production and use of organic fertilizer (which in any case will have to be used for increased organic farming requirements as detailed in Goal Three).

7.7 Environmentally safe waste management and disposal by households, hospitals and industries

An on-going public campaign on the benefits of better waste management and disposal at homes and offices will be introduced in the short-term. This will include educating people on the benefits of separating organic and inorganic waste, recycling of paper, plastic and glass, and so on. To meet the demands of a well-informed public, the government will build a well-functioning waste management and disposal system by 2021. This will involve regular waste pick up as well as a well-functioning sewerage system for both rural and urban areas. Toxic wastes from industries and hospitals will be legally required to be properly treated and disposed of separately from household wastes. Environmentally-responsible behaviour will be increasingly important for our export-oriented industries as the global movement for environment protection will put increasing pressures on importing countries to boycott products that have a negative impact on the environment during their production process.

7.8 Cost-effective alternate sources of energy

Given our goal of improving energy supply coverage throughout the country (see Goals Three and Six), we expect a private and non-governmental sector driven development and dissemination of renewable energy (e.g. from solar, wind and water sources) by 2021. Solar energy is being used in many countries as an alternative to hydro and other sources of power. As part of a Master Plan for Power Development to efficiently use our existing limited energy supply, the government will adopt policies in the short term to popularise the use of solar power for household use in the urban areas in order to release additional power for industrial uses. The longer term strategy of this Plan will be to provide guidelines for other economic sectors that are involved to increase both the investment and the operation of small and medium size hydro power stations, to classify areas to be supplied with electricity from the national grid or by local sources such as diesel units, wind, or solar energy, etc.

Advances in technology will also make renewable energy more cost-effective. Our aim will be to reduce dependence and pressure on biomass fuels through increased use of renewable energy. Similarly, the government will popularise bio-fuels (including biogas) to replace biomass energy. The government will also take advantage of Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) policies to secure external funding in the areas of (a) energy efficiency, (b) development of alternative sources of energy, and (c) enhancing carbon storage capacity in the country.

7.9 Protection of designated forest areas

At the current rates of depletion, it is estimated that by 2021, the total amount of forest

areas will be largely diminished, leading to a concomitant loss of biodiversity of both plant and animal species. Increased availability of alternate sources of energy and off-farm rural employment (see Goal Three) are expected to reduce dependence on forest areas for natural resources by the poor. In addition to this, a culture of corporate social responsibility will be promoted so that local companies will help establish eco-forest parks in designated parts of the country. These initiatives would be similar to those currently being conducted by companies like Fujitsu in Malaysia, Vietnam and Thailand, whereby the company provides funds and volunteers for forestation activity for an initial period. The local authorities eventually take control over the parks to be used for environmental education and eco-tourism. We will explore similar initiatives in parts of Chittagong and the hill tract districts to develop and protect forest areas for eco-tourism while at the same time providing income earning opportunities for the local indigenous people.

7.10 Effective natural disaster management

The effects of rising levels of global warming include a possible rise in sea levels, a possible increase in temperatures, a disruption of monsoon patterns and possibly more intense if not more frequent cyclones. The more vulnerable section of rural Bangladesh will have to face a disproportionately large portion of the effects of these natural disasters (e.g. drought, cyclones, and floods). Unlike many other countries, Bangladesh has garnered some capacity to deal with natural disasters. These will need to be further strengthened. Along with an effective warning and evacuation mechanism that can be implemented in the short term, a natural disaster insurance scheme will be developed over the long term with support from the government to ensure that physical and property damages are adequately compensated. By 2021 more substantive measures will be put in place which would enable Bangladesh to mitigate seasonal floods and drought. This will require long term investments in Flood Control and river management, establishment of a *Green Belt*, more efficient use of water resources, investments to ensure dry season river flows and water storage.

7.11 Institutionalisation and effective implementation of EIA

To ensure the protection of our environment in a world of rapid industrialisation a system needs to be in place that examines and assesses the environmental soundness of all industry and non-industry related activities. The current Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) system in Bangladesh is inadequate due to the lack of legislative control over EIA, procedural inappropriateness/corruption, weak institutional

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capacity and the lack of public participation. Over the next few years, we will enhance the EIA system by improving the level of public participation, inaugurating a more effective EIA legislation and improving institutional capacity. The EIA legislation will clearly highlight the EIA procedures and the responsibilities of stakeholders. The procedure will ensure that cumulative effects are considered and alternative plans are generated. Public awareness will be improved regarding the requirement of public participation in the EIA process as a legal requirement. Necessary watchdog institutions will be in place to ensure the effective implementation of the EIA process in the short term. In this respect NGOs and/or an environment ombudsman could play vital roles. The capacity of government institutions (such as DoE) to implement and enforce the EIA system will be substantively improved over a longer time frame through staff education and training.

GOAL EIGHT

To be a more inclusive and equitable society

Ensuring a socially just and inclusive society is central to building a participatory democracy. Building such a society will be seen as morally imperative, politically necessary and economically justified. We need to recognise that if poverty is to be eliminated and high rates of growth are to be realised and sustained, we have to enhance the productivity and purchasing power of the economically deprived sections of society who constitute a potentially large consumer, labour and capital market. Failure to accommodate the deprived within the benefits of development could not only limit our growth potential but also threaten the sustainability of our democracy. Our development agenda therefore will be built upon policies and institutions that allow for the sharing of benefits of development by all irrespective of income class, gender, religion or ethnicity. Such an agenda will require institutions as well as policies that facilitate the processes of economic participation and social inclusion.

By 2021, we must aspire to build a more inclusive and equitable society that celebrates our cultural diversity. Such a society will democratise opportunities through widely diffusing access to credit as well as productive assets, ensuring universal access to remunerative work, quality education and healthcare, protection to the vulnerable and care of the elderly whilst ensuring full participation in the democratic process as well as protection under the law, to all segments of the community, irrespective of class, gender, religion or ethnicity.

8.1 Access to productive asset opportunities for the property-less and marginalised groups

One possible solution to growing inequality and increasing poverty is to restructure the economic system to make it possible for all to become owners of capital. Asset ownership has to become a universal and fundamental human right. The deprived suffer from an insufficiency of productive assets, which limit their capacity to participate competitively in the market economy. Micro-credit has played a significant role in opening up income earning opportunities for the resource poor. Our goal will be to ensure universal access to micro-credit for the resource poor but with a special emphasis on reaching out to those households who are totally resourceless. However we need to move beyond the opportunities created by micro-credit to enable the resource poor to participate in the growth generating sectors of the economy. This requires access to productive assets to broaden opportunities for the deprived to participate in the dynamics of growth. Such opportunities will serve to both expand the

growth base of the economy whilst serving to reduce income inequalities. Asset ownership can be extended from the micro to the meso sectors of the economy into the corporate sector. Our goal must be to integrate the deprived into the much larger opportunities provided by the macro economy in an age of globalisation.

Some specific interventions in the rural areas to broaden asset ownership will include policies that allow the immediate recovery of productive resources within the ownership or control of the state to be distributed to the resource-deprived. For example, a million acres of *khas* land will be recaptured by the state for distribution to the landless in the rural and urban area for agricultural and residential use. Additionally, the government will ensure the immediate implementation of the *Jalmahal* policy to distribute fisheries rights to poor fishermen in order to give them access to open and closed water bodies. The landless will be organised in groups to own and operate deep and shallow tube wells, thereby providing income earning opportunities for such groups.

Specific measures will be designed to protect the property rights of the indigenous communities, and effective policies will be introduced to give them a stake in the development process in their ancestral homelands. For example, introduction of the *Employment Guarantee Scheme* could help to provide them with access to wage labour in the development of their traditional land for purposes of promoting eco-tourism. Provision would also be made to provide them with usufruct or ownership rights, in particular forest-based projects located in their ancestral homelands, so that they can share in all income-generating opportunities originating in the development of their natural resource base.

8.2 Corporate ownership rights for workers and the deprived

The economically deprived as well as those employed in poorly remunerative jobs will be provided with opportunities to participate in the modern fast-growing sectors of the market economy. Workers will be allowed to acquire an equity stake in the enterprises for which they work. This policy will be especially applicable for labour intensive enterprises where a large part of the value addition is contributed by labour services. Making workers stakeholders in such enterprises will help in achieving more harmonious worker-owner relation as well as provide workers with a stake in enhancing their productivity and the profitability of their enterprises. As more and more people become owners and begin sharing in the dividends produced through ownership of capital, their purchasing power will be enhanced. Since market demand would thus increase, this will stimulate increased production and investment which would lead to additional growth of the economy.

The economically deprived as well as those employed in poorly remunerative jobs will be provided with opportunities to participate in the modern fast-growing sectors of the market economy. Workers will be allowed to acquire an equity stake in the enterprises for which they work.

Opportunities will also be provided for the income deprived groups to acquire an equity stake in major corporate enterprises. Similarly, small farmers will be provided opportunities to acquire a share in the value added to their primary produce and labour by providing them with an equity share in the agro-processing sectors of the economy. To support such a process of broadening of ownership of corporate assets we would need to design special institutions such as dedicated mutual funds for low-income clients, as well as specialised social enterprises owned exclusively by the deprived. In order to underwrite acquisition of such ownership rights by this new type of clientele, we shall develop specialised financial institutions, drawing in both aid as well as market derived funds to provide credit to the deprived to acquire such a corporate equity stake. Our goal for 2021 would be to build a society where a significant proportion of the resource-deprived would have acquired an ownership stake in land, natural resources, the corporate sector and real estate, to a point where the social landscape of Bangladesh will be transformed into a more just and equitable society.

8.3 Safety nets for vulnerable groups

It will be the responsibility of the government to ensure that certain vulnerable sections of the society (e.g. the elderly, the disabled, widows, orphans and the chronically ill) are able to maintain a decent livelihood. This will involve ensuring a minimum level of food, housing, education and healthcare allowances for them. Specialised assisted living arrangements will be put in place for each type of group. For example, provision will be made for establishing old-age homes, special boarding schools for the disabled and orphans, across the country. This will help both in the administration and financing of these facilities while making it easier for both public and private funding to identify these facilities, and support them. Innovative healthcare financing schemes for the chronically ill will be important. For example, non-profit group-based insurance schemes will be available to provide quality healthcare for the resource poor. The insurance industry will be charged with designing such a scheme.

Special policies and resources will be committed for infrastructure investment and affirmative action to accommodate the special needs of the disabled to ensure that their disabilities do not limit their employment opportunities or possibilities of social and economic integration and inclusion.

8.4 Ensuring gender equality

In order to correct the historic injustices which have denied women in Bangladesh the opportunity to realise their full potential and make a more effective contribution to national development, major changes will be introduced in national policies, allocative priorities and institutional arrangements relating to the role of women in society. In order to substantially reduce gender injustice by 2021 we will ensure significantly enhanced ownership and/or access for women to the means of production (land, capital, finance, equipment), as well as equality of access to opportunities for education and skill development. We will make provisions for ensuring full parity in educational and training

opportunities, especially at the tertiary level where we will enable women to move beyond traditional occupational niches so that they can participate in the fast growing areas of a knowledge-based economy. This will serve to end gender stereotyping and will improve prospects for women's upward mobility in the labour market.

To ensure that women are able to take advantage of the opportunities that are made available to them, it will also be important to counter the negative social attitudes and cultural practices that hinder their participation in the education system as well as in the labour market. This will involve educating both men and women to change their mindsets regarding traditional gender roles and to recognise the importance of supporting and equipping women to more fully participate in the political and economic life of our society. In order to ensure unfettered opportunities for women to participate in public life, the increasing threats of violence to their person will have to be effectively eliminated. This will require legislation to guarantee the protection of women backed by adequate investment in instruments of law enforcement targeted to the specific needs of women/girls moving in public spaces and in their homes, and will also require policy, institutional and educational interventions to provide social as well as political protection needed to provide a sense of security to women across the country.

By 2021 we will ensure that women are fully equipped to protect their own rights and interests through equal representation and effective participation at all levels of governance from the *Union Parishads* to the *Jatio Sangshad*. To ensure progress towards this objective, immediate provision will be made to ensure for the direct election of women to reserved seats in the *Jatio Sangshad* (see Goal One for details).

8.5 Provide minimum guaranteed employment opportunities for the resourceless

Given our demographic dynamics, it is estimated that the labour force will have grown at almost twice the rate of population growth by 2021. This will mean that over 50 million jobs will have to be created, a large part of which will have to be in the rural areas, to absorb the excess labour supply that may not be remuneratively accommodated within the agricultural sector. There is no guarantee that such transfers out of agriculture into the non-farm sector will be fully absorbed so that pockets of poverty could persist. To meet this challenge, affirmative action will be taken to assure income entitlements to all affected households. We shall accordingly aim to put in place, over the next five years, an *Employment Guarantee Act*, which will ensure a statutory right to 100 days a year of employment at the minimum wage in each district to one person per household. Such schemes can provide multiple benefits if they are tailored to the geographic needs of each of our 64 districts. For example, in areas that suffer mostly from soil erosion, labour under this programme can be used for land regeneration. Similarly, in the CHT, tribal groups could be employed for social forestry work. *Monga* affected areas may be similarly targeted with area specific employment programmes so that the curse of *Monga* is eliminated in the next five years.

8.6 Targeted programmes for the physically challenged

The number of physically challenged people in the country is significant. This includes a

large number of children as well. However, they face formidable challenges in accessing education, participating in economic activities, getting entry to the job market, availing public services such as transport and, in general, in conducting their day to day activities. These obstacles deter them from realising their full potential. By 2021 targeted measures will be undertaken to adequately address the requirements of the physically challenged population which will include catering to children with special needs, equal employment opportunities for the physically challenged and creation of an overall physically-challenged friendly environment.

8.7 Economic and social inclusion of minorities

We need to design policies which ensure that minorities will no longer remain exposed to discrimination but will instead be provided with a stake in society through access to employment in the public and private sector as well as through opportunities for advancement according to their merit, access to credit and other opportunities. We will ensure that minorities enjoy equal protection under the law and by the law enforcement authorities. To ensure that measures of affirmative action to assure access to education, public jobs, services and resources for minority groups do not increase hostility towards them, we will educate our public on the benefits of a well-integrated and equal society from both a moral and an economic perspective.

8.8 Guaranteed access to educational and healthcare opportunities for the resource-poor and minorities

Access to quality education and healthcare is a right and a necessity to allow the resource-poor and minority groups to participate equitably in the development process and derive the benefits of economic growth (see Goal Three). To this end, the wide disparities which are emerging in our educational system must be bridged through an exponential improvement in the institutions of human development designed to serve the more deprived segments of society. To realise these goals major investments will be made in the public provisioning of education as well as improving the governance of our institutions of human development. In this respect, we shall forge the necessary political will on the part of the government to abolish child labour (whether used for domestic work or in any industry) in the short term via necessary legal provisions that ensure that violation can be prosecuted as a criminal offence.

Whilst our systems of human development are being upgraded, a system of scholarships (e.g. merit-based stipends for specially underprivileged students as explained in Goal Five), training (e.g. vocational training of specific groups as explained in Goal Six), and other

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targeted programs in healthcare (e.g. country-wide health kiosks as explained in Goal Four) will be put in place.

8.9 Promotion of cultural, religious and ethnic diversity as a national heritage

Failing to manage our diversity and recognising that all citizens, irrespective of their different cultural and religious differences, have equal rights, can lead to instability, violence and oppression. When people feel excluded from opportunities or denied respect for their way of life and heritage, the sense of humiliation and outrage can be profound. The only sustainable solution is to embrace our diversity and translate it into an asset and a source of national pride. This requires not just individual tolerance and a change in our mindset but a secular state with policies that recognise cultural diversity and religious identities and allows them full expression as well as political representation. We will respond to the challenge of cultural accommodation through initiatives for political participation, religious freedom, pluralist policy for language and affirmative actions to enhance opportunities for the disadvantaged communities.

To achieve a more socially cohesive nation, the education system will play an important role. Children will be exposed to the idea of cultural diversity and tolerance; they will be educated to respect and accept such diversity early in their lives. Having a unified education system (see Goal Five) that exposes students to different religions and customs, and emphasises that religious and ethnic identity will be made irrelevant in terms of accessing political and economic opportunities will help to nurture and broaden young minds.

8.10 Reduced regional inequality

By 2021, the gap in the urban and rural development will be bridged on a priority basis. Expected growth in non-farm activities in peri-urban areas (see Goal Three) will help to develop local growth centres, which in turn should help to reduce income inequality between regions, as well as between urban and rural areas. Such growth will take place based on a comprehensive development plan that takes into account local limitations and potentials. Credit to the small and medium enterprise sectors in rural and peri-urban areas shall be significantly increased, as this remains an area of enormous potential for dispersing the scope and benefits of growth. SMEs will be brought together in area clusters or industrial groups to derive the benefit of external economies in marketing, procurement and technology upgrading. Appropriate opportunities will be provided for this.

Decentralised local governments with greater authority and sufficient funding will be required to address regional inequality. For example, with the help of an 'equalisation formula', central government funding for local government administration can be allocated, based on the average income of the locality. This would enable poorer districts to access more development funds per inhabitant, irrespective of which political party forms the district administration. Regional development will be structured on the basis of need, not on the basis of party political considerations. Special attention will be directed to the more backward regions of the country, where more holistic regional development programmes using public, private and NGO resources will be applied in a planned way.