

# Govt pursuing a 3-R strategy to repair Bangladesh: PM

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman today said his government is pursuing a 3-R strategy – Recovery, Restoration and Reconstruction – to repair Bangladesh, ravaged by more than one and a half decades of fascist rule and exploitation.

“To repair Bangladesh, which was ravaged by fascist rule and exploitation, the Government is pursuing a 3-R strategy – Recovery, Restoration and Reconstruction,” he told the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly at the UN Headquarters here.

The Prime Minister said Bangladesh, after freeing itself from enforced disappearances, killings, abductions, corruption, looting and money laundering, is once again embarking on the path of democracy.

He said an immense horizon of possibilities has now opened before Bangladesh and his government has begun implementing extensive programmes to transform the country’s working-age population into skilled human resources, taking advantage of the demographic dividend.

“Detailed measures have been taken to create extensive employment opportunities and develop Bangladesh as a ‘manufacturing hub’,” he said, seeking support from Bangladesh’s development partners in this endeavour.

The government, he said, has allocated US\$50 million in the current fiscal year to create opportunities for young entrepreneurs, researchers and innovators to implement start-up initiatives.

Highlighting the government’s focus on women’s empowerment, Tarique Rahman said women are at the forefront of all

government plans for the country's socio-economic transformation as more than half of Bangladesh's population are women.

He said the government is prioritising women's education, employment and entrepreneurship, including expanded opportunities for cash financing for women, particularly in the small and medium-sized industries sector.

Free education opportunities for women up to the undergraduate level have also been made available, he said.

The Prime Minister said the government wants to ensure not only electoral democracy but also the democratisation of the economy so that the benefits of economic growth and prosperity reach every family and citizen.

To this end, the government has introduced support programmes for economically disadvantaged people through social protection initiatives such as the Family Card, Farmers' Card, Sports Card and e-Health Card.

He described the Family Card, issued in the name of the female head of each household, as a symbol of women's economic empowerment and said the government plans to introduce a Universal Card by integrating the cards introduced to provide support in different sectors.

Tarique Rahman also said the government is implementing its 31-point programme presented to the people before the February 12 national election, with 73 percent of its activities directly aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals' "Leave No One Behind" theme and another 27 percent indirectly aligned.

The government, he said, hopes implementation of these programmes will reduce development disparities between urban and rural areas and advance accountability and inclusive sustainable development under the 2030 Agenda.

The Prime Minister said his government has given special importance to education, health and sports, noting that the country has made its highest-ever budget allocation for the education sector.

“There are plans to gradually increase education spending to 5 per cent of GDP within the next five years,” he said, adding that a curriculum has been developed with emphasis on technical and practical education to establish an ethically sound and employment-oriented education system.

He said school bags and uniforms, along with free midday meals, are being provided to primary students from the first grade to increase school enrolment and improve the quality of education.

Sports has also been included as a subject in the education curriculum for the first time with the aim of establishing sports as a profession, he said, adding that more than two million students participated in a month-long nationwide football tournament last June.

Turning to the international situation, the Prime Minister said human-made conflicts have created unrest in many countries, causing displacement and humanitarian crises while wars and conflicts are putting severe pressure on the global economy, energy security and global energy supply systems and contributing to rising inflation.

He said conflicts should be resolved through dialogue, diplomatic processes and mutual cooperation, with equality, fairness, protection of mutual interests, respect and dignity forming the basis of bilateral and multilateral relations.

Bangladesh sees the United Nations as the centre of efforts to establish an understanding-based global community that respects the independence and sovereignty of states, he said.

Tarique Rahman reaffirmed Bangladesh’s commitment to general

and complete disarmament, prevention of nuclear weapons proliferation and arms control, while supporting UN initiatives aimed at establishing global humanity and world peace.

He also reaffirmed Bangladesh's unwavering support for the legitimate demands of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and to establish an independent State of Palestine.

On the Rohingya crisis, the Prime Minister said Bangladesh has been providing shelter to more than 1.2 million forcibly displaced Rohingyas from Myanmar for more than nine years, putting immense pressure on the country's resources, environment, security and local communities.

"The only solution to this problem is the safe return of the displaced Rohingya population to their homeland, Myanmar," he said.

He called for firm and effective support from the United Nations and the international community for a lasting solution to the crisis and urged continued life-saving assistance for the Rohingyas until their repatriation.

"If the international community fails to ensure justice for the displaced Rohingya population, this may turn into a humanitarian crisis in the near future," he added.

On climate change, Tarique Rahman said Bangladesh is one of the countries most vulnerable to its adverse impacts despite making little contribution to global carbon emissions.

He said Bangladesh expects stronger global action at COP31 on climate justice, climate finance and adaptation support.

The government has launched a programme to plant 250 million trees across the country over the next five years, while emphasis has been placed on clean and solar energy, he said.

He also said a programme has been launched to excavate 20,000 kilometres of canals across the country to help free Bangladesh from the scourge of floods and droughts.

The government has begun implementing the Teesta Master Plan and the Padma Barrage project to increase freshwater flow into the Sundarbans and conserve water through large reservoirs, he said.

On science and technology, the Prime Minister said Bangladesh's large young population and growing digital capabilities have created new possibilities, but access to advanced technology, knowledge and research must be made available to all.

"We do not want today's digital divide to become tomorrow's artificial intelligence divide," he said, stressing technology transfer, skills development and affordable access to modern technologies for developing countries.

He called for an effective UN policy framework to ensure that the benefits of artificial intelligence and social media can be used positively around the world.

The Prime Minister also called for continued international support as Bangladesh prepares to graduate from the Least Developed Country category, particularly through assured financing, greater market access, technology transfer and capacity building.

He said regional trade facilitation, connectivity and meaningful cooperation can help countries achieve shared prosperity in an increasingly interdependent world.

Tarique Rahman also stressed the need to ensure sustainable production of vaccines, medical supplies and diagnostic equipment in developing countries so that they remain readily accessible to all.

Bangladesh, he said, wants to establish a prosperous, self-reliant, welfare-oriented democratic state where everyone, irrespective of political affiliation, religion or race, can live safely with equal rights, respect and dignity.

“Bangladesh’s progress in the areas of democracy, human rights, good governance, accountability, political stability and the investment environment is continuing,” he said, adding that the government is working to establish a safe and stable Bangladesh with a business- and investment-friendly environment.

“We want to build a Bangladesh where young people can pursue their dreams without fear or hindrance, women can lead their lives with confidence, and every child can grow up with the opportunity to realise their full potential,” he said.

“Above all, the people will have the assurance of a safe and peaceful life. That is why we say, ‘Bangladesh First: Bangladesh for All’.”

Earlier in his address, Tarique Rahman congratulated the President of the 81st session of the UN General Assembly on his election and assured Bangladesh’s full support during his tenure.

He paid tribute to the martyred freedom fighters of Bangladesh and recalled the contributions of those who sacrificed their lives in the struggle to establish democracy, justice and people’s rights since independence.

He also paid respect to those martyred and injured in the mass uprising of students and people in July-August 2024.

The Prime Minister said the people entrusted the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) with the responsibility of governing the state through the “fair, free and impartial” national election held on February 12 this year.

He said he felt nostalgic standing before the UN General Assembly as his father, Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman, and his mother, former Prime Minister the late Khaleda Zia, had also addressed the world from the same platform on behalf of Bangladesh and its people.

Tarique said Bangladesh remains committed to multilateralism in maintaining international peace and security and, as Vice-Chair of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, continues to advocate sustainable peace, conflict prevention and inclusive peacebuilding.

He also highlighted the contributions of Bangladeshi peacekeepers and women peacekeepers to UN missions around the world.

On migration, he said the government is committed to ensuring regular, safe and orderly migration and called for stronger global cooperation to ensure the rights, dignity and welfare of migrants.

Concluding his address, the Prime Minister reaffirmed Bangladesh's unwavering support for all the principles and values of the United Nations in the cause of establishing world peace.