

PM pledges to establish prosperous, democratic Bangladesh

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman today pledged to establish a prosperous, self-reliant and welfare-oriented democratic Bangladesh by ensuring political and economic empowerment of the people and creating equal opportunities for all.

“We want to establish a prosperous, self-reliant, welfare-oriented democratic state where everyone, irrespective of political affiliation, religion or race, can live without anxiety and in safety, with equal rights, respect and dignity,” he said.

The Prime Minister was addressing the General Debate of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly at the UN headquarters here.

He said the government was working to establish a safe and stable Bangladesh with a business- and investment-friendly environment, while ensuring progress in democracy, human rights, good governance, accountability and political stability.

Tarique Rahman said the government was pursuing a 3-R strategy – Recovery, Restoration and Reconstruction – to repair Bangladesh.

“Bangladesh is now once again embarking on the path of democracy,” he said, adding that the government was implementing programmes to transform the country’s working-age population into skilled human resources by taking advantage of its demographic dividend.

He said detailed measures had been taken to create extensive

employment opportunities and develop Bangladesh as a “manufacturing hub”.

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

Tarique Rahman said women were at the forefront of all government plans for the country’s socio-economic transformation as more than half of Bangladesh’s population are women.

“The government is giving priority to women’s education, women’s employment and the creation of women entrepreneurs,” he said.

He said opportunities for cash financing had been expanded for women, particularly in the small and medium-sized industries sector, to support the creation of women entrepreneurs.

The government had also made opportunities for free education for women available up to the undergraduate level, he said.

Tarique Rahman said the government wanted to ensure not only electoral democracy but also the democratisation of the economy so that the benefits of economic growth and prosperity reached every family and citizen.

To this end, the government had 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 said.

“The government considers the ‘Family Card’, issued in the name of the female head of each household, to be a symbol of women’s economic empowerment,” the Prime Minister said.

He said the government also planned to introduce a “Universal Card” by integrating the cards introduced to provide support

in different sectors.

The Prime Minister said the government had given special importance to education, health and sports, and made the highest-ever budget allocation for the education sector for the first time in the country's history.

"There are plans to gradually increase education spending to 5 per cent of GDP within the next five years," he said.

He said a curriculum had been developed with emphasis on technical and practical education to ensure an ethically sound and employment-oriented education system.

School bags, uniforms and free midday meals were being provided to primary school students from the first grade, he said, expressing hope that the initiatives would increase school enrolment and improve the quality of education.

Tarique Rahman said sports had also been included as a subject in the education curriculum for the first time with the aim of establishing sports as a profession.

As part of the initiative, more than two million students participated in a month-long football tournament held across the country in June, he said.

The Prime Minister said science and technology would shape the future as the world was entering a new era of artificial intelligence, biotechnology and science.

He said Bangladesh's large young population and growing digital capabilities had created new possibilities, but access to advanced technology, knowledge and research needed to be brought within everyone's reach.

"We do not want today's digital divide to become tomorrow's artificial intelligence divide," he said.

Tarique Rahman said Bangladesh respected innovation and intellectual property, while stressing the need for technology

transfer, skills development and affordable access to modern technologies.

“It is now time for the United Nations to adopt an effective policy framework so that the benefits of the development and rapid expansion of artificial intelligence and social media can be used positively in countries around the world,” he said.

Turning to Rohingya crisis, Tarique Rahman said Bangladesh had been sheltering more than 1.2 million forcibly displaced Rohingyas from Myanmar for more than nine years.

He said the only solution to the crisis was the safe return of the displaced Rohingya population to their homeland in Myanmar and called for continued life-saving assistance for them until their repatriation.

Tarique Rahman said Bangladesh was continuing its progress in democracy, human rights, good governance, accountability, political stability and improving the investment environment.

“In the present democratic Bangladesh, we welcome partnership, innovation and both domestic and foreign investment,” he said.

The Prime Minister said the government wanted to build a Bangladesh where young people could pursue their dreams without fear or hindrance, women could lead their lives with confidence and every child could grow up with opportunities to realise their full potential.

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