



PM seeks continued support from development partners

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia reaffirmed Saturday her commitment to establish an accountable government and sought continued support of Bangladesh's development partners to carry forward her poverty reduction initiatives, reports BSS.

"We have already implemented various reforms for improving governance, law and order and investment climate. We have made utmost efforts to accelerate economic growth and reduce poverty," Khaleda Zia said while inaugurating the three-day Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF)- 2004 here at Hotel Sonargaon.

The Prime Minister said in spite of significant achievements during the last two and a-half years in the area of social and economic development, Bangladesh "have still a long way to go."

Delegates from 32 countries and donor agencies are attending the three-day meet here. Saturday's inaugural session will be followed by seven working sessions on Sunday and Monday.

In her address, Khaleda Zia focused on different measures taken by her government to improve law and order, accelerate economy, alleviate poverty, curb corruption and establish good governance.

She spoke on the progress of setting up of an independent Anti-Corruption Commission and separation of judiciary from the executive.

The prime Minister said that the parliament had passed the independent Anti-Corruption Commission Act, 2004 and added steps were underway to make the Commission operational soon.

The Prime Minister expressed the hope that the Forum would contribute to a better appreciation of Bangladesh's development efforts and help reach greater understanding with "our partners in development on how best we should proceed towards achievement of our goals".

The Prime Minister informed the development partners that her government has taken a number of measures to improve law and order situation.

A special cell has been established in the Ministry of Home Affairs and at the district level to monitor the progress of sensational criminal cases, she said.

Khaleda Zia mentioned about the positive impact of the operation of Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) in Dhaka city on overall law and order situation and the 'noticeable qualitative changes' in the country's criminal justice delivery system following enactment of Speedy Trial Law and setting up of Speedy Trial Tribunals.

The Prime Minister said that the Independent Anti-Corruption Commission will be vested with adequate financial, administrative and legal authority to carry out its functions independently.

As part of the process of separating the judiciary from the executive, she said, a Judicial Service Commission has been constituted for recruitment of judicial officers. She said a large number of measures have been taken for promoting good governance, bringing about financial discipline and accountability in last two and a half years.

"Steps have been taken to rationalise the size of government organisations and agencies, which include merger, liquidation, closure and partial closure of state owned enterprises," she added.

To make civil service more efficient and professional, the Prime Minister said, the government has introduced merit-based promotion and career planning.

The government is also undertaking a programme for capacity building of government officials through higher education and skill development training both at home and abroad, she added.

Referring to her government's success in economic front, the Prime Minister said the government brought about macro-economic stability from the serious imbalances it inherited, facing a lot of challenges during the last two and a half years.

She said the government's pro-poor growth strategy is directed towards creation of more jobs for the poorer sections of the population and the poverty-prone regions.

Khaleda Zia expressed her firm belief that with the impressive export recovery, agriculture and industrial growth and a slow down in inflation rate, the country's GDP will significantly grow in the coming years.

Mentioning that poverty reduction receives the highest priority of her government, the Prime Minister said: "We are committed to implement the reform strategy set out in the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP)."

"Now, we are preparing the National Strategy for Economic Growth, Poverty Reduction and Social Development, which is expected to be completed by December 2004," she said.

The Prime Minister said significant progress has been made in the social sector, particularly in education, health and social welfare.