

# SMART Cooperatives for SMART Bangladesh

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In a message given at the cooperative conference organized by the Bangladesh National Cooperative Union on 30 June 1972, father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman described his historical philosophy and dreams about cooperatives. He said: 'Every person in my country will get food, shelter, education and a better life - this is my Dream. In this context, the grassroots cooperative movement has to play a very important role. Because the path of cooperatives is the path of socialism, the path of democracy.' In this historical speech of Bangabandhu, his dream-development philosophy and cooperatives have become mingled and 'Sonar Bangla' and 'Cooperative Bangla' have grown together.

Analyzing the historical statements of the father of the nation's cooperative philosophy, some indicators of the socio-economic development of the people of Bangladesh can be found. These are: (1) Meeting the basic needs of every person in the country; (2) The quality of life of the people of Bangladesh will improve; (3) The grassroots cooperative movement will be an important development regulator; (4) The cooperative will be the source of Bangabandhu's dream Golden Bangla; (5) Bangladesh and the people of Bangladesh will be awakened by the magic touch of cooperatives. (6) The lives of the peoples of Bengal will flourish with the awakening of the dormant village of Bengal and (7) Bangladesh will be excited by the frenzy of new creation. The above 7 development indicators are related to the construction index of 'Smart Bangladesh' i.e 'Sonar Bangla' and 'Cooperative Bangla' and reflect the visionary development ideas of the father of the nation.

Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib's life philosophy was a deep-rooted humane philosophy towards people's well-being in order to ensure the happiness and prosperity of the people of this country. The foundation of Bangabandhu's philosophy is a historical belief that only the people can make history and these very people or Citizen are the prime factor in SMART Bangladesh. Bangabandhu's profound Dream and humanitarian struggle is the reflection of his vision of development. This dream was reflected in the spirit of the liberation war called by Bangabandhu, where the dream was to ensure at least 2 things for the people of independent Bangladesh - (1) Elimination of discriminations between people and (2) Building a non-communal mind structure of the people. That is, according to Bangabandhu's development philosophy, independent Bangladesh will be a 'healthy-strong-knowledge-rich-undifferentiated developed and prosperous country of cultured people'.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman repeatedly expressed his determination to establish the newly independent Bangladesh as 'Golden Bangla'. Even before independence, he expressed the idea of 'Golden Bangla' in the East Bangla region of Pakistan. In his concept of Sonar Bangla, there was a deep trust in the soil and people - which, if implemented, will ensure the position of this country as a developed and prosperous country on the world map.

Bangabandhu was deeply confident about the land and people of Bangladesh. Therefore, in 1969, one of his pamphlets with images of discrimination was called 'Sonar Bangla Shmshan Ken?-Why Golden Bangla is the Crematorium?' Bangabandhu dreamed of building a prosperous 'Golden Bangla' free from hunger, poverty, exploitation and corruption, standing against the existing inequality between West Pakistan and Bangladesh, i.e. East Pakistan. His thoughts and consciousness, actions and efforts included the political and economic liberation of the Bengali nation. During his short reign, the father of the nation drew a far-reaching and realistic plan to build the dream of 'Sonar Bangla', on the one hand, and on the other hand, he took all the revolutionary steps to implement it. He has left exemplary guidance in every field of the country's politics, economy, agriculture, education, art, science and technology, literature and culture. As he has determined the destination of the country, he has also prepared a road map to reach the destination.

In the course of continuous progress of the father of the nation's development philosophy and dreams, Bangladesh will be transformed into a high-middle-income country in 2031 and a high-income developed

country in 2041, the roadmap of which is outlined in the Vision 2041 document. Around 2041, Bangladesh will be the Golden Bangla of Bangabandhu's dream, where there will be no poverty, no shortage and no illiteracy. At that time Smart Bangladesh will have four main components: (a) Smart Citizen; (b) Smart Society; (c) Smart Economy and (d) Smart Government. On the occasion of celebrating the 70th year of independence in 2041, we will successfully implement the vision of 2041, a dynamic technology-based advanced smart Bangladesh where there will be: (a) Paperless Offices; (b) Cashless Society and (c) SIMless Connectivity. All these factors and beliefs are fundamental to human development and this is the main component of Smart Bangladesh. In the construction of Bangabandhu's 'Sonar Bangla' and 'Cooperative Bangla', the cooperative must take an effective position to turn people into smart people and human resources. In line with the national development philosophy, the cooperative will also have slogans: 'Technology is considered as the path to progress and Digital Bangladesh for all' and 'Digital Bangladesh is now visible-now goal is to build a smart Bangladesh'.

Smart Bangladesh initiative is a practical project to turn the beloved motherland Bangladesh into a happy-prosperous-developed and people-welfare state through the best use of technology. And in the vision of this 'Smart Bangladesh' project, we want to say 'Cooperative Bangla' to understand a Bangladesh with maximum use of information technology, where in the light of cooperative philosophy and consciousness, the collective action will be: (1) People's quality of life will be improved and prosperous; (2) The country shall be free from all kinds of crimes; (3) The country will be free from all forms of corruption; (4) There will be no mismanagement in the country; (5) The right person will be in the right place; (6) No working hand shall be idle; (7) The country will be able to face the challenges of the 21st century and (8) the country will have a Knowledge Based Society. We believe that through the implementation of these 8 best regulations, Bangabandhu's dream of 'Golden Bangla' and 'Cooperative Bangla' will be developed.

The Department of Cooperatives should come forward following the cooperative philosophy and guidance of the Father of the Nation. In this case, the actions can be: (1) Development of the production and marketing system in the cooperative sector to bring services and products to the doorsteps of the people. (2) Making cooperatives skilled in specialized products and services by training them in new technologies. (3) By implementing the cooperative principle of 'inter-cooperative cooperation', bringing the cooperatives of different regions of the country to the online platform to develop product and service linkages. (4) Expanding the cooperative in new areas (such as: Garments sector, Agricultural production in fallow land for employment of expatriates, School Cooperatives, Tourism Cooperative, Health Cooperative, etc.) (5) To train manpower appropriately for Smart Bangladesh. Under the successful leadership of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh has got independence sheeding an ocean of blood. Development experts define Bangladesh as follows: 'Bangladesh is a Gold mine with a great promise. Its potential lies in its soil and people. All that we need to do is to dig its soil and explore its people.' That is, Bangladesh is a country of infinite potential whose potential is hidden in its soil and people. All we have to do is dig up its soil for production and develop its people.

The main philosophy of transforming Bangladesh into a developed and prosperous country by exploiting the infinite potential of soil and people lies in 'Sonar Bangla' and 'Cooperative Bangla'. Bangabandhu's 'Sonar Bangla' and 'Cooperative Bangla' are aimed at the common people's activism and the cooperative is a tested means of activism. We believe that the cooperative philosophy of the father of the nation and the essence of SMART Bangladesh's development is also rooted here.

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