

**80th session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and  
the Pacific (ESCAP)**

Speech by

**HE Sheikh Hasina**

Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Her Excellency Executive Secretary, ESCAP,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamu Alaikum and a very good morning to you all.

I am happy to virtually join the 80th Annual Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific being held in Bangkok. This year's theme, "**Leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific,**" is rightly chosen to foster regional collaboration in utilizing digital innovation to accelerate the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development implementation.

**Madam Chair,**

This session is taking place at a time when the world is facing multi-faceted challenges. While we were recovering from the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, new challenges like the Russia-Ukraine war have destabilized the world economic order. Every country is struggling with high commodity prices because of production and supply chain disruptions. The developing and Least Developed Countries are the worst sufferers. To achieve SDGs, these issues need to be resolved.

**Excellencies,**

Bangladesh has demonstrated a strong track record of growth and development. Our per capita income has tripled in the last decade, reaching 2 thousand 765 USD in the 2022–23 fiscal year. We achieved GDP growth of over 6 percent for the last three consecutive years. We reduced the poverty rate from 41.5 percent in 2006 to 18.7 percent in 2023 and made commendable progress in universal primary education, food security, reduction of maternal and child mortality, gender inequality, women empowerment, etc.

Our appropriate measures have made it possible for people without bank accounts to conduct financial transactions using mobile banking and digital payment systems, fostering their economic empowerment, and reducing poverty.

The planned development has helped Bangladesh graduate from the LDC category. We have now declared our next vision to become a ‘Smart’ Bangladesh by the year 2041.

**Excellencies,**

Bangladesh has signed the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific (CPTA) as one of the first three countries. We are also working on preparing a draft of the Cross-Border Digital Commerce Policy and the Logistics Development Policy. The Asia and Pacific countries have made good progress in various areas but need to do more. I would like to suggest a few more actions for consideration:

1. A more inclusive and connected Asia-Pacific region is to be fostered by enhancing e-commerce and digital trade and accelerating IT-enabled services.

2. Collaboration is to be increased among ESCAP members in knowledge sharing, technology transfer, and innovation-driven trade and investment.
3. Support LDCs and vulnerable nations affected by financial crises arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic and global conflicts.
4. Development partners and international organizations must combine and enhance their commitment and support for scaling up disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation measures.
5. Countries in this region may help each other with early warning systems for cyclones, floods, and disasters.
6. Promote digital literacy programs and online learning platforms to ensure inclusive and equitable education opportunities, bridging the digital divide.
7. Exchange of digital health innovations and skill-based knowledge, enabling healthcare professionals to successfully use digital tools for pandemic preparedness and response.

Thank you all again.