

The Inaugural Ceremony of the Seminar on Experience Sharing of National Human Rights Institutions: Challenges and Way Forward

Organizer: National Human Rights Commission, Bangladesh (NHRCB)

Venue: Balcony Hall, Hotel Pan Pacific Sonargaon

Date: 28 January 2017 at 10:00 AM

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

- Hon'ble Chair of this Seminar and Chairman of NHRCB Mr. Kazi Reazul Houque;
- Present here as Special Guest:
 - Shri Justice H. L. Dattu, Hon'ble Chairman of National Human Rights Commission, India
 - Senior Advocate of Bangladesh Supreme Court
Barrister M. Amir-Ul Islam
 - Country Director of UNDP Mr. Sudipto Mokerjee;
 - Former Chairman of NHCR, Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury
- Distinguished Guests, Members of the Media

Assalamo Alaikum! Namaskar! And A Very Good morning!

It is my pleasure to be present amongst such illustrious gatherings in the **Seminar on Experience Sharing of National Human Rights Institutions: Challenges and Way Forward** organized by the National Human Rights Commission, Bangladesh (NHRCB).

Distinguished Guests

- Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible.
- So the Government under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is firmly determined and committed to uphold human rights, human dignity, rule of law, non-discrimination, constitutional governance as well as to eliminate all sorts of terrorist activities in Bangladesh.

- Through our constitution was enacted by the parliament on the 4th of November,1972 & came up force 16th December,1972. To protect and promote human rights throughout Bangladesh, independent statutory body National Human Rights Commission established in 2009 by the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. We see that NHRC plays a vital role to ensure human rights.
- In a developing context, we are not always blessing with ideal scenarios. Given the reality, NHRCB has performed quite well in the past years. In my view, challenges are not always bad. Having challenges and limitation makes one strive better. Moreover, in the case of NHRCB they have done exactly that. Despite limitations including the gaps in the law of the NHRCB, they have acted with sincerity and with dedication to the cause.
- I would say from the inception period to now the NHRCB's institutional and programmatic capacity has strengthened. We see some visible progress. Expanding the regional offices, conducting more and more fact-finding missions and wider and broad awareness programmes are some very good examples of progress. The gradual increase of the allocation of state budget is an indicator of the progress.
- In my view, NHRCB is engaged on a priority basis in much needed sectors. Violence against children is an area of concern to Bangladesh. To protect and promote child rights in Bangladesh we have a comprehensive Children Act 2013. This law should be implemented in its letter and spirit and I must say NHRCB together with Civil Society Organizations has undertaken quite a number of initiatives to promote child rights
- Human Trafficking is yet another concern. Bangladesh often considered as source country and at times a transit. We have a strong law to combat human trafficking. Our law enforcing agencies and border guards are doing their best to ensure the application of this law.

- Migration from one place to another has been a common phenomenon of human civilization. From our world history, we know that people moved from one place to another either better livelihood or economic gains. Migration is a right. But it should be safe and secure. Every year thousands of people migrate to foreign countries from Bangladesh. They send remittances, which is one of the key sources of our national revenue. However, their rights are often at stake. The legal process related to migration should be strictly adhering to and we have a dedicated ministry to deal with this subject; the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment. Our government is working with the host countries (Countries receiving Bangladeshi Manpower) to ensure that the welfare of our migrant workers given due attention and their rights protected.
- Let me take the opportunity to mentions several other human rights initiatives of Bangladesh. The 7th five-year plan integrates human rights and it was formulated following a human rights based approach. It is also one of our national mechanisms, which will help us to achieve the SDG goals.
- Under the Governance Innovation Unit (GIU) of PMO we have established union level information centers and they provide several categories information including access to justice and human rights. Moreover, the GIU has conduct research and advocacy work to raise awareness on human rights issues.
- The Constitution of Bangladesh recognizes that all citizens are equal for law and are entitled to equal protection of law. But in many cases poor people are unable to get this benefit due to financial constraints. Government is very much concern to the rights and justice of them. This is why government has enacted **Legal Aid Services Act, 2000** and established

NLASO with the necessary support and resources to provide justice to poor with free of cost.

- Government is supporting the poor, vulnerable, marginalized men, women and children through the social safety net programmes. Every year the budget allocation to the social safety net programmes have increased.
- Our Government promotes human rights activities undertaken by thousands of NGOs and CSOs. The NGO affairs bureau under the Prime Minister Office encourages the NGOs and CSOs to contribute to change the life of people for the better.
- Through the effective steps taken by of the present government, Bangladesh is gradually flourishing in ensuring human rights of all persons. It is framing laws complying with human rights. The judiciary is giving directions, interpretation and making necessary orders to protect human rights. In spite of all effective efforts, Bangladesh is facing some challenges in protecting human rights. I hope & believe that we will be able overcome the challenges and move ahead to build a country in which human rights of all people are ensured.

Ladies and Gentlemen

- We should learn from good practices from regional and international experiences. I am happy that today's event is one devoted sharing of experience and good practices. This kind of programme should be organized as a regular practice.

Let me once again commend NHRCB for its role in domestic and international human rights spheres

Thank you very much for your participation and patience hearing.

JOY BANGLA, JOY BANGABANDHU!

LONG LIVE BANGLADESH!