

# **International Local Government Conference 2013**

## **Inaugural Ceremony**

Address by

HE Sheikh Hasina

Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Bangabandhu International Conference Centre, Wednesday, 06 Chaitra 1419, 20 March 2013

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

The Chair,

Dear colleagues,

Dr. Jotin V Modi, President of United Cities and Local Governments-Asia Pacific,

Diplomats,

Local governments representatives,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamu Alaikum.

It is indeed a matter of very pleasure for me to be present at the inaugural ceremony of the International Local Governments Conference organized by Municipal Association of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Union Council Forum.

I hope that the conference will help devise an appropriate and effective means to serve the citizens and thereby accelerate the pace of development of South Asia and alleviate poverty. Bangladesh has already been considered as a star performer in alleviating poverty.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The local government system has been functioning in the South Asian nations, including Bangladesh, for the last several centuries. However, the system has undergone a lot of transformation in the course of time. Before the Mughal era, there were headmen and Panchayets; then came Kotoyal, Mohalla, Union and Thana councils. At present, we have union Parishad, pourashava, upazila and zila parishad and city corporations. We have ensured effective decentralization of the government system to ensure quality service for the people. Opportunity has been created to empower the rural poor.

Half of the world population is women. The women of the developed, developing and least developed countries are equally lagging behind in economic, social and political fronts. The entire capacity of the women could not be utilized. The global productivity went down and expected GDP growth was not achieved. As a result, social development has been hindered.

We have amended the related laws to preserve seats for women in every tier of the local government bodies. They can also compete directly with their male counterparts. Our measures have yielded positive impact in the overall empowerment of rural women. The women can now contribute to economic activities and thereby help reduce the poverty with a faster pace. During the last four years of our current tenure in the government, some 50 million people have been elevated to middle class from below poverty level.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The local government representatives come forward to serve the people of their respective areas during the time of need. We have taken steps to strengthen the local government bodies and attached priority to enhance their skill and economic empowerment. As a result, the capacity of the institutions has been increased. The government is following the policy of participatory to prepare plans and their implementation. People are now getting effective services.

We have constituted Dhaka (north), Dhaka (south), Narayanganj, Comilla, Rangpur and Gazipur city corporations to ensure quality services to the people. Seventeen new municipalities were established. Some 56 municipalities have been upgraded to B category from C category

while 30 municipalities to A category from B category. New complex were built in each union parishad and manpower has been increased.

The government is implementing various programmes to establish good governance, alleviate poverty and ensure participatory democracy. I would like to thank the donors for their cooperation in implementing the programmes.

During the four year tenure of the government, we have developed the rural infrastructures. Nearly 2 million rural consumers have been provided with electricity connections. The educational institutions have been refurbished and community clinics were constructed to ensure healthcare facilities to the rural people. Union Information and Service Centres have been established to provide various services, including education, healthcare and agriculture. Solar panels have been set up in remote areas to provide electricity. Employment opportunity has been widened and per capital income enhanced.

Supply of pure water and sanitation system has been improved from the union to city corporation level. The sanitation coverage in Bangladesh is the highest 91 percent among the SAARC nations.

Online birth registration has been introduced across Bangladesh. Alternate dispute resolution is now functioning through village arbitration council. The local government representatives are being imparted training at home and abroad. The honorarium of porsava mayor and councilors has been increased by 3 to 4 times. Massive programmes, including development of roads, bridge, culverts, drainage system, bazars etc have been implemented to render services to the people.

Effort has been undertaken to prepare a master plan for development of the municipalities. We have been working to make the local government bodies, including the union parisads, municipalities, upazila and zila parisads and city corporations, more welfare-oriented, skilled and effective ones.

The conference has created an opportunity to exchange views and experience among the elected representatives of local government bodies of South Asian nations. I hope the recommendations made at conference would help strengthen the local government bodies of the region. The representatives of the local government bodies of Bangladesh would also get an opportunity to bring dynamism in their welfare oriented activities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are committed to strengthening the democracy. The Election Commission has been reorganised and made as an effective institution. Up to last February, some 5,552 elections, including 15 by-election to parliamentary seats, were held during the current tenure of the government. All the elections were free, fair and credible. There was no allegation of any unfair means. A silent revolution has taken place with regard to empower the rural people politically.

We are pledged bound to build a peaceful, non-communal and prosperous Bangladesh free from hunger and poverty by the year 2021. Development programmes are being implemented to achieve the objectives.

Let us come and build a Bangladesh imbued with the spirit of war of liberation and fulfill the dream of Father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

I once again thank you all and declare the international local government conference open.

Khoda Hafez

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu  
May Bangladesh Live Forever.