

# Village Court Conference Inaugural Session

Speech by

**Sheikh Hasina**

Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

The chair,  
Dear Colleagues,  
UNDP Country Representative,  
EU Delegation Charge d Affaires,  
UP Chairmen and Secretaries,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

**Assalamu Alaikum and Very good morning to you all.**

I welcome you all to the inaugural ceremony of the village court conference.

The village court is not a new idea in our country. The elders of our villages have been resolving trifle matters informally for long. The village court law has been enacted to give the idea a formal shape and legal structure.

The Local Government Division has undertaken 'Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Project' in 2009 aimed at executing the village court law with the financial assistance of the UNDP and European Union. Preliminary the courts are being implemented in 350 unions of the country.

In the village court law, the elected UP chairmen and members have been authorized to conduct the courts. This is in one hand a unique authority, and on the other a huge responsibility. Justice will have to be ensured performing the responsibility properly.

**Dear chairmen and Members,**

We want that you should dispose the trifle matters in your localities applying the authority bestowed upon in the village court law properly. And thereby you earn the confidence and love of the people. We hope, a peaceful atmosphere and fraternity will be maintained through this process.

However, you should remember that nothing unjust should be imposed being influenced by others. Religious superstition and fanaticism shouldn't have any room in discharging justice. The disputes would have to be resolved through understanding and motivation.

We have also taken steps to introduce village courts in 4 and a half thousand Union Councils outside the project area. We would like to urge the donors to come forward to provide assistance in this regard.

We are considering appointing a judicial assistance in each Union Council to carry out the activities of the village court. We are pledge-bound to undertake any activity for the welfare of the country's people. I hope the village court will pave the way for getting justice for the poor and disadvantaged rural people.

Primarily there might be some loopholes in carrying out the activities of the village courts. But I think, the process will be standardized gradually. Our grassroots level public representatives

will be able to establish it as an ideal model of delivery of justice. The village courts of Bangladesh will surely be a model for the developing countries.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Our one of the main election pledges is to establish a strong and effective local government system. We have been working relentlessly to fulfill the commitment. Inshallah, we will materialize our pledges. Country's people have already started to derive the benefits of our development activities.

We divided the Dhaka City Corporation into Dhaka North and Dhaka South City Corporations to improve the service-delivery and decentralization of administration. People have started to get the benefit of the division. We have upgraded Narayanganj and Comilla into City Corporations to expand the civic amenities. Elections have already been held in both the city corporations peacefully.

Our government has enacted and amended Upazila Parisad Laws and formulated the regulations to strengthen the Upazila Parisad. Four posts of employees have been created for each Upazila Parisad. Similarly, we have undertaken massive programmes to develop the municipalities aimed at ensuring civic amenities. Some 509 officials have been appointed for the municipalities.

As part of turning the Upazila Sadar and extended industrial areas into towns under the Vision 2021 goals, 9 new municipalities have already been established. The mayors of Pourashavas, Upazila and UP Chairmen are being trained at home and abroad. A master plan is being prepared for 23 districts headquarters' municipalities and 223 Upazila headquarters' municipalities. The birth and death registration system has been brought under digital system. Already nearly 30 million registrations have been preserved under digital system. Gradually all the birth and death registration will be brought under digital system.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Union Council is the oldest local government system in our country. The elected representatives of the Union Councils reside at the closest proximity of the people. They play a vital role in implementing a host of programmes of the government. The lion's share of the social safety activities are being executed by the Union Councils.

A number of projects aided by UNDP, EU, World Bank and Unicef are being implemented at the Union Councils. The biggest among those is the Local Governance Support Project. The project was executed during 2006-2011 with the financial support of the World Bank. A total of 1034 crore taka was directly channeled to the Union Council as Basic Block Grant during the last 5 years.

Considering the importance of the project the government has taken up the LGSP-2 at a cost of 3912 crore taka. It will continue upto 2016. For the first year, Tk 429 core has been allocated. We hope that the project would help turn the Union Councils into strong local government bodies.

We want to build the Union Councils into stronger and self-reliant for the benefits of the people. The Union Council will be turn into the hub of implementing all development activities, including the village courts.

With this conviction and few words, I declare the two-day village court conference open.

Thank you all again.

Khoda Hafez.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu  
May Bangladesh Live Forever.

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