

**Dinner-Evening**  
**German-South Asian Parliamentary Group**

Address by  
Her Excellency  
**Sheikh Hasina**

Hon'ble Prime Minister Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh  
Berlin, Germany, Monday, 24 October 2011

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Fellow Parliamentarians,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening to you all.

I would like to thank you for inviting me and my delegation to this warm and friendly gathering. I am indeed happy to be among fellow parliamentarians this evening.

I believe only democracy can lead to sustainable development of people and nations. I learned this as a child as I followed the political career of my father and the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. In his life long struggle for freedom and democracy, and for our people's fundamental rights, he suffered incarceration many times, and our family suffered with him. His determination finally led to the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, and establishment of parliamentary democracy.

Unfortunately, my father and 18 members of my family were assassinated on 15 August 1975, when he was deeply engrossed with entrenching democracy in Bangladesh. Since then, I have held the office of Prime Minister twice, once from 1996 to 2001, and again from January 2009 till now. On both occasions, my aim has been to continue with my father's efforts in establishing firmly the democratic principles and ideals in my country.

In my earlier tenure, for transparency and accountability, I introduced the practice of "Prime Minister's Question Hour Time" in the Parliament every Wednesday. The Prime Minister during the hour would need to answer questions from members of parliament. I also introduced live television coverage of the parliamentary proceedings for the benefit of the people.

Since women empowerment is vital for real and sustainable democracy, we are encouraging women to participate in all spheres of our national life, particularly in politics. In my first tenure as Prime Minister, I held local government elections where for the first time women participated. 45,000 women contested and nearly 13,000 were elected to seats reserved for women. In the parliament, the number of reserved seats for women has also been increased from 45 to 50.

During my current term, in my efforts to consolidate democracy, one of the first steps I took was to establish the 48 parliamentary standing committees in the very first session of the parliament, something that was never done before. I have also revived the "Prime Minister's Question Answer Time" and allowed 22 private TV channels and 352 daily newspapers to strengthen democratic practice in the country.

As for empowering women, I have laid the ground for 64 women to become MPs, of whom 19 are directly elected, a Whip and two women chairperson of parliamentary standing committees that includes other women as members. We have also a woman deputy leader of the house, leader of the opposition and the prime minister. In my cabinet, I have appointed 5 ministers who hold the important portfolios of Home Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Agriculture, Labor, and Women and Children's Affairs.

We have indeed been trying hard to establish democracy firmly through strengthening our Parliamentary practices and our media, empowering our women, as well as through establishing

other democratic institutions such as the Commissions on Election, Human Rights, Anti-Corruption, Information, to name a few. I could go on talking of the many other measures that my government had taken to strengthen democracy in Bangladesh, but I do not wish to keep you away from a wonderful dinner.

I, therefore, conclude, again expressing my sincere thanks for a very pleasant evening with you all parliamentarians, and distinguished guests.

I thank you all.

Khoda Hafez.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu.

May Bangladesh Live Forever.

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