

Rotary Peace Conference Inauguration Ceremony

Speech by

Hon'ble Prime Minister
H.E. Sheikh Hasina

7 February 2015 Radison Blue Water Garden, Dhaka

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

The Chair,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamu Alaikum and Very Good Evening to you all.

I welcome you all at the inaugural ceremony of the International Rotary Peace Conference. I would like to extend my gratitude to the organizers and the participants of this important conference.

I pay my homage to the language martyrs in the month of the historic Language Movement. I also recall with great gratitude one of the pioneers of language movement, the greatest Bangalee of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. My tribute goes to the martyrs of the liberation war.

We assembled here at a time when the people of the country are passing their days amid an unprecedented panic of petrol bomb attacks. As many as 55 people so far died by the petrol bombs hurled by the killers. Several hundred people are maimed and languishing at the hospital beds with severe pain and agonies. The air of the Burn Units of the hospitals turned heavy with the foul smell of the burnt people.

You and countrymen know who are behind the inhuman mindless acts. The countrymen never saw ever before such brutality like killing of innocent people by hurling petrol bombs.

The BNP-Jamaat alliance also let lose a similar heinous reign of terror to resist 5 January election and protect the war criminals. They torched and vandalised hundreds of vehicles. They felled thousands of trees beside the roads and highways and killed as many as 20 members of police, BGB and army.

Nearly 200 people have been killed by their violent attacks, petrol bombs, and arson and bombs attacks. Government offices, power plants, business establishments, footpath shops even innocent cattle heads were not spared from their vengeance. Mosques, temples and pagodas were vandalised and torched. Hundreds of copies of holly Quran were burnt to ashes in front of the National Mosque, Baitul Mukarram. Hundreds of railway bodies and engines were destroyed or damaged by uprooting fishplates and tracks.

On the election-day, they torched 582 schools and killed 26 people, including presiding officer. After the election, they vandalised and torched numerous houses of the minority community and Awami League supporters.

As the country's economy was marching forward recouping the losses of their destructive acts, the BNP-Jamaat again waged a war against the countrymen. They again engaged in killing-spree. They became crazy to protect war criminals and plunderers of wealth. They took the path to terrorize the people by killing them.

Historical evidence tells us that the Bangalee nation never bowed down their heads before the oppressors. Bangalee protected the dignity of the mother tongue through letting their bloods in 1952; ousted the autocrat Ayub regime, and we earned our motherland's independence in 1971 sacrificing 3 millions lives.

Bangalee nation is invincible. They never conceded defeat and this time they can't be defeated. We would surely defeat the ferocious hyenas who are out to kill them. We would establish peace defeating the perpetrators.

I am sometime get perplexed as to whom for we do politics. Our politics is for the common people's welfare. But what BNP wants to achieve through killing innocent people?

BNP boycotted the 5 January election. That was their mistake. But why the people of Bangladesh would suffer for their mistake?

Dear audience,

The Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman espoused his vision for a global order in his speech at the United Nations General Assembly. In that speech Bangabandhu had said "Bengali nation is pledge-bound to establish a global order based on peaceful co-existence, social justice and free from poverty, hunger, exploitation and aggression.

The vision of our great leader continues to guide national development pursuits of Bangladesh and our engagement in the global affairs.

Bangladesh's commitment to international peace has been manifested through the proposal of 'Culture of Peace and Non-violence' adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at its 68th session.

Our commitment and contribution to global peace is further reaffirmed through our support to the UN as a top troops and police contributing country is its peacekeeping missions. Bangladesh contributed the highest number of women police to UN peacekeeping, commensurate with our credentials of empowerment of women

People of Bangladesh do not like extremism. We are always vocal against terrorism. We are showing zero tolerance against any form of terrorism. We are committed not to sheltering anybody or any organisation to carry out subversive activities against any country using Bangladesh's soil.

I think poverty is the main enemy of mankind. That's why we have taken all out measures to eradicate poverty. With expansion of social safety net programmes like VGD, VGF, TR, GR, allowances for old-age people, widows and distressed women, freedom fighters, physically and mentally challenged people etc over 10 million people have directly been benefitted.

Besides, initiatives have taken to ensure sustainable development through developing human resources, creating employment opportunities and removing income disparity.

At the end of BNP-Jamaat alliance government, per capita income was USD 543 which has now risen to USD 1,190. Nearly 50 million people have been elevated to middle income group from poor.

The poverty rate dropped to 24 percent from 41.5 percent. Nearly 10 million people were employed in public and private sectors. The foreign currency reserve rose to USD 22.40 billion from 3.48 billion in 2006-06.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Rotary has been working for over a century with the motto of 'Service beyond Self' for the development of communities and for furthering peace in the world.

Rotary has been performing commendable jobs for socio-economic development of Bangladesh. Their activities in the areas of water supply and sanitation, halting major diseases, maternal and child health, education and literacy, and economic development are worth mentionable.

We have to remember that development or peace can't be achieved keeping a major section of the society under-developed. The wealthy and enlightened section of the society can play an important role in establishing peace through eradicating poverty, illiteracy, and superstition.

I hope that the Rotarians will continue their efforts for establishing peace removing the walls that divide the capable and the incapable, the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless.

I extend my thanks you all again and declare the International Rotary Peace Conference open.

Khuda Hafez.
Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.