

12th World Autism Awareness Day-2019

Speech by

HE Sheikh Hasina

Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

The chair,

Dear colleagues,

Autistic children, persons and their parents,

Ladies and gentlemen.

Assalamu Alaikum.

I welcome you all at the function organized marking the 12th World Autism Awareness Day.

I pay deep homage to the Greatest Bangalee of all times, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. I recall with gratitude the four national leaders, 3-million martyrs and 200 thousand women, who sacrificed their modesty for the cause of independence.

I extend my greetings on the occasion of 12th World Autism Awareness Day to all persons with Autism, their family members, parents and the persons, Government and Non-Government Organizations in Bangladesh who serve the people with disabilities and work for their development.

Most of the people of our society now quite aware of autism. This awareness is increasingly growing over our government's continuous publicity.

However, we are still lagging behind expressing our judicious feelings to this specialized fraction of our society. As a result, our autistic/disable peoples face discrimination and negligence.

The parents feel shy to expose their children with autism. As a result the autistic children are forced to confine within the cubicle.

Despite all regards, the special needs for the persons with autism have to be considered with positive attitude at all walks of life including family, social, education and their workplace as well.

I believe that our concerted efforts and a conducive environment will help the persons with autism syndrome to become self-reliant. Only then, they will be able to become participatory in all walks of life in our society.

Dear audience,

Our proclamation of independence- which we achieved under the visionary leadership of the Father of the Nation- had pledged to ensure equality, human dignity and social justice for all people of Bangladesh. After independence, under the able guidance of Bangabandhu formulated our constitution that also vowed a clear position against discrimination of any citizen by any means.

The Government of Bangladesh in 1974 under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman started functioning 47 co-education schools for the visually impaired under the jurisdiction of the then Social Welfare Department. At that time, the integrated co-education policy extended the opportunity for disables to educate with the mainstream students was really progressive, time demanding and highly effective initiative.

It was so visionary of our leadership after independence that we could reach to a discrimination free society. But, on 15 August '75, the killers and their collaborator not only

brutally killed the Father of the Nation but also tried to full-fill their mission through asphyxiating the spirit of our liberation war and the pledges in the proclamation of our independence and also the potentials of such a discrimination free education system.

We have specific commitments for the disables. Our government has not only passed acts for rendering those commitments but also working hard for ensuring their education, employment, communication with a view to establishing their dignity in the society.

Our government has passed two laws namely "Disability Rights and Protection Act-2013" and "Neuro Developmental Disabled Protection Trust Act-2013". Necessary rules have also been adopted with regard to those acts. A "Neuro Developmental Disability Protection Trust" has been formed in 2014 under auspices of those acts.

Since its establishment, the government has allocated 70.97 crores (700.97 millions) taka. The trust allocated 40.55 lacs (4.55 millions) taka in the fiscal year 2017-2018, to 811 lowered income NDD persons to bear their treatment expenses. It also aimed to distribute 70 lacs taka on the same ground in the fiscal year 2018-2019, to 1200 lowered income NDD persons.

The government has established 50-seats Nursing Center in Brahmonbaria for girls and 50-seats Nursing Center in Bogura for boys those who are orphan and guardianless. This type of shelter will be established phase by phase in 8 division within very short time where they will receive education, treatment, sports and other facilities.

The government has provided 10 lac (1 million) disable persons a monthly allowance of 700 BDT and 90 thousand lower income disable students with a monthly education stipend of 700 BDT to 1200 BDT.

We have already completed a 15-Floor Complex for disable person in Mirpur at the cost of 80 crores (800 millions) taka. This Complex will host a complete institution with all possible facilities, means and services such as education, training, therapy etc that will be available for disable person.

A 4.16-acre of land has been allotted to the Ministry of Social Welfare for maintaining a playground for children with disabilities by our government. A DPP formulation is underway for establishment of an inclusive sports complex for disables on a 12.01-acres land near Dhaka at Savar which will cost about Tk. 466 crores.

Furthermore, we have to extend opportunity to the autistic children to study together with the general students so that the general students can have the scope to intermingle with the specialized children, to know about their differences and also to be accommodative to accept the different behaviors.

Under the Integrated Special Education Policy, the disabled students are availing the opportunity to study in 62 specialized schools. We have allocated around 23 crores taka for running those schools.

An Autism Resource Centre has been started functioning in the campus of Jatiyo Protibondhi Unnayan Foundation at Mirpur with a view to providing free services to autistic children and older disable people. An Autistic School was established there for providing free education.

Our government established the Institute of Pediatric Neuro Disorder and Autism (IPNA) at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) for improvement of life of the autistic children.

With all synergistic efforts including our governments initiatives the autistic and disable children will able to be included in the normalcy of life.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Autistic and disable peoples are part of our family and also the part of our society. Development will not be achieved in totality excluding this sect. Bangladesh is currently being

known as a developing country in world. With the advancement of our development works, Bangladesh will be in the peak in near future.

We are optimistic to implement the value- "*No one would be left behind*", as the world leader vowed during formulation of Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Our government is tirelessly working for achieving those goals.

Employment is the first and foremost for ensuring development of the autistic and disables. Our government has already started to identify the workplace suitable for people with autism & other disabilities. In those workplaces, the government will appoint autistic and other disabled people on priority basis. I request corporate sector and call upon the private entrepreneurs to appoint persons with autism & other disabilities in their suitable jobs.

I urge upon the government and private sector initiatives for development of innovative technologies for the autistic and disable peoples, which may be regarded as cheaper and user friendly aide for overcoming their physical and mental barriers.

I request the parents for the autistics and disables to spare more times for their children. Please do not feel shy about your children's physical and mental barriers, come up and try to integrate them to the society.

No more negligence. Please come up with your love, adore and care for the autistic children to welcome him to our mainstream society. We can make their life meaningful and full of happiness.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to all of you who came and joined to make this event successful. To the end, I would like to keep my best wishes and regards for all the autistic people in the world so that their life will be filled with great happiness and joy.

Thank you all.

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

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