

## **International Day of UN Peacekeepers - 2011**

Speech by

**Sheikh Hasina**

Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Dear Colleagues,  
Chiefs of Armed Forces,  
Principal Staff Officer,  
Inspector General of Police,  
United Nations Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh Mr. Neal Walker,  
Diplomats,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

### **Assalamu Alaikum and very Good Afternoon.**

At the outset, let me avail myself of this opportunity to express my good wishes and congratulations to you all on the occasion of the International Day of UN Peacekeepers-2011.

I would like to pay my respect to the peacekeepers who have sacrificed their lives for restoring peace across the world. I express my deep sympathy to the injured peacekeepers.

I would pay my deep respect to 3 million people who sacrificed their lives and 200,000 women who lost their innocence in achieving our great Independence in 1971 through the bloody war of 9-month.

I recall with deep respect the greatest Bangalee of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Our independence movement and great liberation war were accomplished under his dynamic leadership and directives and we achieved an independent and sovereign country.

I also recall with deep respect the members of my family who were brutally murdered by the conspirators on August 15, 1975.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Bangladesh believes in peace. The Bangalees are a peace-loving nation. We believe, 'There is no way to peace, peace is the way.' With this belief, people of all walks of life of our country irrespective of caste and creed have been living together harmoniously and peacefully since centuries. This unique speciality of the people of the soil is reflected in our Constitution.

In the Preamble of the Constitution of Bangladesh, it spells out, "It is our sacred duty to safeguard, protect and defend this Constitution and to maintain its supremacy as the embodiment of the will of the people of Bangladesh so that we may prosper in freedom and may make our full contribution towards international peace and co-operation in keeping with the progressive aspirations of mankind;"

Article 25 of the Constitution states, "The State shall base its international relations on the principles of respect for national sovereignty and equality, non-interference in the international affairs of other countries, peaceful settlement of international disputes, and respect for international law and the principles enunciated in the United nations Charter, ..."

Due to the visionary diplomacy of the greatest Bengalee of all time the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh attained the membership of the UN on 17 September 1974. Since then Bangladesh has been working as a vibrant member of the UN and maintaining its peace loving and amiable image in the world community.

Immediately after the independence, Bangladesh has started the replication of its peace ideals to the conflicting races and sects in various countries. In 1988, Bangladesh deployed 15 military observers in Iraq-Iran as UN peacekeepers.

Today, after 23 years of laudable peacekeeping, we could proudly announce that, at this moment, Bangladesh is the highest peacekeepers contributing country of the world. This is the achievement of our Armed Forces and Police Force. I would like to congratulate them for this achievement.

According to the latest release of the UN, at present 99,382 peacekeepers of 115 countries are deployed across the world. Of them, 10,589 including 180 female peacekeepers, are from Bangladesh. It means, about 11 per cent of world peacekeepers are from Bangladesh. This is a rare glory for us. At the same time, the country has been earning foreign currency through the peacekeepers.

The professionalism, dedication, courage and friendly attitude of our peacekeepers are hailed in entire peacekeepers' community and they are often referred as model peacekeepers. I congratulate all Bangladeshi peacekeepers who have brought this shining glory for Bangladesh through their blood and sweat.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

You will be happy to note that our position in the UN mission has been strengthened during the tenure of the present Government. An additional Infantry Battalion of 850 and an Engineer Company of 180 personnel have been deployed in the war-torn Congo in 2010. For the first time one MI-17 helicopter and one C-130 transport aircraft were deployed there.

For the first time, a Frigate and an Offshore Petrol Vessel from Bangladesh Navy were deployed in United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. Three Bell-212 helicopters with 104 personnel are deployed in Ivory Coast. Two Formed Police Unit comprising 160 personnel, including one all Female Formed Police Unit, first of its kind, were deployed in Haiti.

At this moment, the process is on for deployment of one additional signal platoon in Ivory Coast. Besides, a good number of armoured personnel carriers and other essential equipments have been purchased with a view to increasing the participation of Armed forces and Police personnel in the peacekeeping missions. I believe, all these efforts will add to the morale and operational momentum of our peacekeepers in the field missions.

The proportional representation of Bangladesh in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is being ensured. We are trying to create more opportunities to the planning and strategy formulation process for the peacekeeping missions.

**Dear Peacekeepers,**

Today you have attained respect and confidence of the UN and other peacekeeping countries by dint of your professionalism, dedication, courage and constant endeavour for world peace. You have been restoring peace in the war-ravaged countries. Through this, you have earned untainted love and respect of the people of the war-torn countries. Our nation would remember your endeavour for long.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As of today, our 103 members of peacekeepers are martyred at various UN peace missions. Amongst them, 5 Peacekeepers have embraced martyrdom from June 2010 to May 2011. I pay my salute to all these heroes and deep sympathy to their family members.

Last year we honoured families of 4 shaheed Peacekeepers and 15 wounded Peacekeepers.

This year we have honoured the family members of 5 martyrs and 19 wounded peacekeepers who sustained injury from 2006 to 2007.

Today I pray for the departed souls of all the martyred peacekeepers and acknowledge their commendable roles with due regards. At the same time, I wish for the continued success of

all the Peacekeepers, male and female, who are participating in the peacekeeping missions around the world.

I would like to express my special thanks to the UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh. His constant goodwill and support for our peacekeepers has contributed a lot for image building of our peacekeepers in the world forum.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We have been giving emphasis on advanced training. During our 1996-2001 tenure of the government, we set up Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training. This time, we have modernized the institute. As a result, the quality of training has been increased. We have been increasing training facilities to train our peacekeepers for their overseas employment.

Our Government is taking and will take every step to modernize and impart advanced training to the Armed forces and Police personnel, so that they could maintain and further improve their standards in peacekeeping. Personally I am taking keen interest so that Bangladesh is adequately represented in UN Headquarters and in the Department of Field Services.

In fine, I call upon all the members of the Armed Forces and Bangladesh Police and other peacekeepers to maintain their professionalism, honesty, dedication, courage and friendly attitude in the peacekeeping operations. Bangladesh Government would continue to undertake all necessary steps to upgrade the Armed Forces and Police, so that they could operate in the peacekeeping missions with more efficiency and with better equipments. The people of the world, specially the people of Bangladesh, will ever acknowledge the contribution of Bangladeshi peacekeepers for world peace.

I hope, peacekeeping activities of Bangladesh would flourish further and the peacekeepers of Bangladesh, with honour and pride, would keep flying our ever-shining national flag around the world. This would be a fillip to achieve our cherished goal of establishing 'Sonar Bangla' as dreamt by the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. We want to build poverty-free, democratic, progressive, peaceful, non-communal, technology-based modern Bangladesh.

May Allah bless us all.

Khoda Hafez.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu.

May Bangladesh Live Forever.

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