

International Women's Day-2018

Speech by

HE Sheikh Hasina

Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Bangabandhu International Conference Center, Dhaka. Thursday, 24 Falgun, 1424, 8 March, 2018

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Honorable Chairperson,
Colleagues,
Representatives of women society and
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamu Alaikum and a very good morning to you all.

I would like to greet all women of the world, including women of Bangladesh, marking the International Women's Day-2018 today. On this occasion, I also welcome the audience present in this program.

March is the month of achieving our great independence. 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 pay deep sympathy to the wounded freedom fighters and martyrs family members.

I remember with profound respect those valiant women freedom fighters, who fought for independence, the women who gave healthcare and other services to the freedom fighters.

I pay homage to Begum Rokeya, pioneer of the women's education. I remember with great respect, my mother Begum Sheikh Fazilatun Nesa Mujib, who worked for the country along with my Father all the time giving him inspiration, courage and suggestions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For ages, women of the country were under discrimination and repression. Half of the people of our country are women. We cannot prosper leaving country's half of the population, women, behind.

We have been implementing various projects and programs to consolidate women's empowerment, child protection and to achieve gender equality as laid down in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Our government has taken initiatives for creating a women friendly environment-abundance in food, nutrition, medical and educational facilities and ample scope of employment at the root level.

We have created equal opportunities for women in every aspect. We have been working to ensure women's rights, wages and participation in development activities for men and women leading to women's empowerment.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman ensured equal opportunity for women in the constitution through articles 19 and 28.

The women who lost their modesty in the war of liberation in 1971 were later awarded with the title of Birangana.

The girl victims of the liberation war whose families were unwilling to take them back in their families, Bangamata arranged their marriages with her own ornaments.

Father of the Nation, formed "Women Rehabilitation Board" in 1972 for the rehabilitation and empowerment of those women.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Assuming office after a gap of 21 years in 1996, Bangladesh Awami League government started to design different programs for women development.

Our Government has awarded the title of 'freedom fighters' to 185 Biranganas, women humiliated by the Pakistani occupant forces and war criminals during Liberation War of 1971.

We have been implementing various projects and programs for women to bring them in to the main stream of the society and the nation. For this, many new job opportunities has been created for the women.

Our important programs for women development include:

- 'National Women Development Policy 2011' has been formulated. For implementing this policy 'National Action Plan-2013' has been adopted.
- We have increased maternity leave from 4 months to 6 months with salary.
- The name of mother has also been introduced along with the name of father in every aspect.
- 'Tathya Apa' Project (Development of Women Through ICT for Building digitized Bangladesh) with Tk 545 crore.
- Investment Component for Vulnerable Group Development (ICVGD) project with Tk 39 crore.
- Construction of Sonaimuri, Kaliganj, Araihasar and Mothbaria Training Center-cum-Hostel Project with Tk 48 crore.
- Construction of a Hostel for Working Women in Kaliganj Upazila with Tk 17 crore.
- District wise women computer training project (64) with Tk 53 crore.
- Town based terminal women development Project" (2nd phase) with Tk 86 crore.
- Development of women entrepreneurship for economic empowerment (2nd phase) with Tk 88 crore.
- 10 lakh ultra poor women are being provided with 30 kg rice per month under VGD program with life skill enhancement training.
- A women friendly marketing platform and network is being built up throughout the country for the products and services produced by the women in 'Joyeeta' brand.
- Construction work of a 12-storey "Joyeeta Tower" in one bigha land at Dhanmondi, Dhaka has been started.
- Countrywide micro-credit programs are going on for the self-employment of women.
- Maternity allowance are being given to 6 lakh poor mothers from rural areas at Tk.500 per month for reducing the rate of mother and child death, development of human resources, increasing the rate of nutritious foods in pregnancy.
- Monthly Tk.500 is also being given to 2 lakh lactating mothers in urban areas under Lactating Mother Facilitation Fund Program.
- We have set up 74 daycare centers.
- 9 One Stop-Crisis Centers have been set up in Govt. medical college hospitals to give necessary services to the women and children victims of violence from one place.
- 60 One Stop-Crisis Cells are also in operation of which 40 in district level and 20 in upazilla level.
- National Forensic DNA profiling laboratory with modern technology has been set up in Dhaka Medical College hospital and 7 divisional DNA Screening Laboratory has been set up in every divisional medical college hospital and Faridpur Medical College Hospital.
- We are operating 8 hostels in different districts, including Dhaka, to provide safe residing places to the working women at low costs.
- Construction work of 12 storied hostels under the project titled "Construction of Hostel for the Garments Women Workers, Baro Ashulia, Savar, Dhaka" has been completed.
- To build up our women as skilled manpower we established 6 training centers including martyr Sheikh Fazilatun Nesa Mujib.
- We increase number of reserved seats for women in the National Parliament from 30 to 50.
- We also reserved 30 percent women seats in the local Government institutions.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

Our government has enacted 'Women & Children Repression Prevention Act-2000', 'Women & Children Repression Prevention Act-2003(Amended)', 'Child Marriage Restraint Act-2017', Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010, 'DNA Act-2014' with a view to protecting the women and children from all types of violence and keeping the provision of stringent punishment.

Dowry Restraint Act-2017 and Child Daycare Centre Act-2018 are in the final stage of approval.

We have given special emphasis on women education in our 'Education Policy'. We are providing free education and stipend for girls up to twelve. We employed 60 percent women in primary schools to empowered women.

Women are now playing a significant role in politics, diplomacy, education, art and culture, research, trade and commerce, sports and games, investigation and adventures. Women are now the wheels of our economy.

Like many developed countries of the world, the head of the Government of Bangladesh is now a woman. At present the leader of the opposition, speaker and deputy leader of the house and justice in Appellate division are women. Women are now working in challenging jobs like Police, Army, RAB forces, peace keeping mission, pilot, train-driver.

Presently there are at least 10 capable and efficient secretaries to the government who are women.

Women are now heading as vice chancellor in the public universities and Election Commissioner in Election Commission.

Our girls have achieved the honor of being regional champion in AFC under 14 football competitions. Bangladesh under-15 women football team won against India in the first competition in SAAF under-15 women championship. Besides, National Women Cricket Team confirmed its place in T-20 World Cup Cricket to be held in 2020.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

We are the nation of Victory. We will go ahead keeping our heads high in the world. Bangladesh is going to graduate into developing country from the LDC status very soon.

I believe, a woman can prove her potentials in every sphere of life if she is brought up with necessary food, nutrition, medicare, education, training and equal opportunity everywhere from her birth.

Let us come and work to create equal opportunity and safe environment for women and child.

Working man-women together, we will build Bangladesh as a middle income country within 2021, and developed and prosperous one by 2041.

I declare the opening of the programs of 'International Women's Day-2018'.

Thank you all.

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

...