

Speech of Mr. Md. Abdul Hamid Advocate MP, Honorable Speaker of Bangladesh Parliament and Chief Patron of APPGs delivered in the Launching Ceremony of Leadership Orientation Programme for the Hon'ble Members of Parliament to be implemented during the next five years

26 May 2009 Tuesday, Winter Garden, Sheraton Hotel, Dhaka

Hon'ble Chair of the Launching ceremony of the Leadership orientation Programme, Deputy Speaker of the Bangladesh Parliament and Chairperson of two All-Party Parliamentary Groups- Mr. Shawkat Ali MP, Special Guests- Deputy Leader of the House Hon'ble Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury MP, Senior Minister's & State Ministers of the Cabinet including Hon'ble Agriculture Minister Begum Motia Chowdhury MP, Hon'ble Home Minister Ms. Sahara Khatun MP; Hon'ble Chief Whip of Bangladesh Parliament & Chair of APPG Vice-Principal Md. Abdus Shahid MP, Adviser's to the Hon'ble Prime Minister, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh H.E. Ms. Renata Lok Dessallien, Whips, Chief Whip of the Opposition in the Parliament and First Vice-Chair of APPGs- Mr. Zainul Abidin Farroque MP, Chairs of Parliamentary Standing Committees, Members of Parliament, Secretary General of APPGs Mr. Shishir Shil, Secretaries of government ministries and departments, Eminent citizens, Heads of Development Partners, Experts, Journalists, Ladies and Gentlemen- Assalamu Alai E Kum.

At first, I congratulate the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) and People's Empowerment Trust (PET) for taking a noble initiative to organize Leadership Orientation Programme for the hon'ble Members of Parliament to be implemented during the next 5 years. I also extend my gratitude to the Bangladesh Parliament, different ministries of the government, UNDP Bangladesh, United Nations Millennium Campaign (UNMC), DFID-SHIREE, Oxfam and Manusher Jonno Foundation for their benevolent support and cooperation.

At the outset, I express my deep shock to those who lost their valuable lives yesterday in the in the coastal area by the onslaught of the Cyclone.

Hon'ble Members of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to have you all here at this afternoon outside the Parliament sessions. It is expected that Parliament will be the pivotal point of all activities in a democratic country. We have once again started our journey towards democracy through a general election held on 29th December, 2008. People have great expectations from this Parliament. Against the backdrop of changing world scenario, the role of the members of this Parliament has been increasing in an unprecedented way. The MPs have to perform their tasks with utmost patience, responsibility and intellect.

Hon'ble Parliamentary leaders, Deputy Leader and Ministers,

A small territory, called Bangladesh, is home to about 140 million people. Tremendous economic growth has been recorded during the last decades. We had GDP growth rate of around 6% during the last couple of years. Tremendous development in various social sectors has also been shown- particularly in the areas of primary education where gender gap has got reduced to a great extent. Despite such achievements, still we are living with stark poverty, illiteracy, mal-nutrition, disparity and deprivation, natural disaster etc. As we all know that ensuring peace, stability and advancement of a nation is potentially linked with fighting poverty. Poverty is multi-dimensional. It cannot be reduced simply raising the level of income; economic growth does not automatically ensure reduction of poverty. Often, faulty development policies and programs cause poverty to happen. Hence, we need to carefully review and analyze the policies and programmes. Being the constitutionally designated "policy directors", Hon'ble members of the parliament should take the responsibility to give directions to national development.

Hon'able guests,

Terrorism and religious militancy have become one of biggest challenge before us. Blind religious militancy intends to push us back to the dark, women to a middle age. Fighting militancy requires going beyond our national territory as it has become a global phenomenon now. Nationally, we are also exposed to a number crisis. Terrorism is still prevalent. The adverse impact of global climate change is gradually causing us too much. A large number of people particularly who live in the coastal areas are the worst victim of climate change losing their assets and livelihoods. In addition, the issues of food security and the rights of the small farmers has become one of the biggest challenges of the time.

There are obvious reasons for touching upon all these issues because we intend to build our nation a prosperous one before the year 2021. Even before that, by 2015, we have to achieve the UN declared and Bangladesh promised Millennium Development Goals. By this set time line, we have to attain certain indicators pertaining to poverty and some other social development goals. If we can successfully attain all these indicators by the set time line, we would be able to move one step forward towards attaining our ultimate goal.

Hon'able Members of Parliament,

Undeniably, effective democratic system paves the way for attaining peace, stability and development. A dynamic and active parliamentary democracy is the precondition for consolidation of democracy and attainment of development.

Hon'ble members of parliament- you seem to be the "Light House" of the nation. The rays of light springing out from the parliament would enlighten the society and the state. Steering wheels of our country is in your hand. This is my heart-felt believe that the Parliament should be the centre of debate and discussion on development issues and it will give directions accordingly. Hon'able members of the parliament will initiate debate and discussion in the parliament with authentic information and relevant substance. The result could be envisaged as: appropriate policy direction and national consensus. Narrow partisan interests always eat up the very fundamental essence of democracy. We do not want to bring back the bitter experience of our recent past. I firmly believe that, we could get rid of narrow partisan interests if we strongly base ourselves on the universal values of Patriotism and peoples' welfare.

Honorable members of the Parliament,

I am pleased to declare that the APPG has successfully taken an initiative to organize Leadership Orientation programs on various developmental issues to be implemented during the next five years- the full tenure of the 9th parliament. The thematic developmental issues include, among others- Poverty Eradication, Rights of the Women and Children, Climate Change, Food Security, Trade Policy, Gender, Human Rights, Education-health, Rights of the Ethnic and Minorities, Right to Information and other issues related to poverty and hunger. This programme is designed for all the Hon'ble members of parliament and it is hoped that through active participation in this program the Hon'ble members of the parliament will be enriched in terms of conceptual clarity and relevant current information as far as those issues and policies are concerned. I strongly believe that it would help you embark on the task of developing policies, programs and monitoring of development activities. It would also ensure your strong policy leadership in the parliament.

Hon'able Members of Parliament,

Undeniably, effective democratic system paves the way for good governance. The main functions of the Parliament are to make laws, to monitor their activities of the Executive and to take decisions on important issues relating to state. Along with making laws, Parliament also performs representative and oversight activities. By introducing the question-answer sessions,, attention-drawing sessions, discussion on matters of public importance the accountability of

the government can be ensured to a great extent. The MPs have a chance to ventilate the demands of their respective constituencies as well as they can inform the Parliament of any issues of national interest within very short span of time. Due to these, the Parliament sessions can be levelled public welfare session which keeps the whole session lively and vibrant.

Hon'able Members of Parliament and distinguished guests,

You all know that in the first session of the 9th Parliament, all the standing committees have been formed and they are now working. These committees can play laudable role to make the Parliament effective and dynamic. With their proper functioning, irregularities and corruption will be reduced to a considerable extent, accountability will be enhanced and good governance may be ensured.

I also like to mention here that for enhancing the aptitude of the hon'ble MPs, for the accelerating their official task and to have a closer contact with the people of their constituencies, we have taken initiative to provide office space for all the MPs. Due to fund constraint, we are now not in a position to provide furniture and other logistics to these offices, still we hope, proper steps will be taken to equip these offices gradually.

I firmly believe that the aim of our Parliamentary democracy is to establish the right of the people and to ensure their welfare. Mutual respect and trust among the members both from treasury and opposition, can flourish our hard-earned democracy. It is my humble request, that you will initiate a quality and live discussion and debate in the parliament on various issues of development concern. I believe that successful implementation of this leadership Orientation programme would result in ensuring quality discussion and debate in our national parliament. The practice of parliamentary democracy will be qualitatively enhanced. Instances will be created to work together on issues of national priority moving beyond our narrow partisan or group interests. The foundation of our parliamentary democracy will be consolidated and extended; people will be empowered; nation will get rid of poverty, hunger and deprivation- we will be confident enough to survive as a proud and self-reliant nation.

I wish for the every success of the Leadership Orientation Programme.

Thank you all.

Long live Bangladesh!
