Speech of Chief Justice of Bangladesh Dr. Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed on a Regional Conference Titled " Judicial Independence and Efficiency"

22/02/2025

Venue: Jela Parishad Milonayoton, Mymensing

Honorable Chair, Madam Justice Farah Mahbub, Judge of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh and Senior Member of the Supreme Court Special Committee for Judicial Reform,
Esteemed ambassador and Head of Delegation of European Union to Bangladesh H.E. Mr Michael Miller
Resident Representative of UNDP Bangladesh, Mr. Stefan Liller,
Senior Rule of Law, Justice and Security Adviser of UNDP Ms. Romana Schweiger
Senior District and Sessions Judge, Mymensing, Jamalpur and Netrakona
Registrar (Judicial), High Court Division, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
Distinguished Members of District Judiciary Mymensing, Jamalpur and Netrakona
Respected President and Secretary of the District Bar Association of Mymensing
Government Pleader and Public Prosecutor of Mymensing
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Afternoon,

সুধী,

আজকেরএইসেমিনারেরসময়সূচি, যাধারাবাহিকতায়৫মএবংরাজধানীরবাইরেআয়োজিত৪র্থসেমিনার, কয়েকটিগুরুত্বপূর্ণকারণেঅত্যন্ততাৎপর্যপূর্ণ।

প্রথমত, এটিএখনপর্যন্তএইসেমিনারসিরিজেউত্থাপিতসবধারণাবাপ্রস্তাবিতমূলভিত্তিগুলোপর্যালোচনারএকটিসুযোগএনেদিয়েছে।

দ্বিতীয়ত, এটিএমনএকটিসময়েঅনুষ্ঠিতহচ্ছেযখনদেশএকটিজাতীয়প্রচেষ্টারমধ্যদিয়েযাচ্ছে, যেখানেগুরুত্বপূর্ণখাতভিত্তিকসংস্কারপ্রস্তাবেরউপররাজনৈতিকঐক্যমত্যগঠনেরচেষ্টাচলছে। এখানেআমাদেরমনেরাখাউচিতযে, বিচারবিভাগসেপ্টেম্বর২০২৪থেকেএরসংস্কারকার্যক্রমেরক্ষেত্রেএকটিঅগ্রগামীভূমিকাপালনকরেছে, যাসর্বোচ্চআদালতেরনেতৃত্বেবাস্তবায়িতহয়েছে।তদুপরি, বিচারবিভাগেরবিস্তৃতএবংবিশদখাতভিত্তিকসংস্কারপ্রস্তাবসমূহপ্রয়োজনঅনুযায়ীসংশ্লিষ্টসংস্কারকমিশনগুলোরসাথেভাগাভাগিকরাহয়েছেএবংতাদেরপ্রস্তাবেসেগুলোরপ্রতিফলনদেখাযাচ্ছে।

তৃতীয়ত, এবংএটিএখনসর্বাধিকগুরুত্বপূর্ণবিষয়, আমিবিশ্বাসকরিযে, জাতিসংঘউন্নয়নকর্মসূচি (UNDP)-এরসহযোগিতায়আয়োজিতআমাদেরসংস্কাররোডশোগুলোএখননিজস্বগতিঅর্জনকরেছে।এরফলে, দেশেরজেলাবিচারবিভাগএবংবিচারিকম্যাজিস্ট্রেসিতাদেরসংস্কারকার্যক্রমেরমালিকানাদাবিকরতেআত্মবিশ্বাসীওক্ষমতাবানবোধকরছে, এবংএটিতাদেরঅধিকার।এরএকটিউৎকৃষ্টউদাহরণহচ্ছে, ২০২৫সালের১০থেকে১২ফেব্রুয়ারিরমধ্যেরাজশাহীজেলাআদালত, মেট্রোপলিটনসেশনআদালতএবংচীফজুডিসিয়ালম্যাজিস্ট্রেটআদালতেহেল্পলাইনচালুকরেছে, যাসুপ্রিমকোর্টহেল্পলাইনেরসাফল্যদ্বারাঅনুপ্রাণিতহয়েছে।

উল্লেখযোগ্যভাবে, রাজশাহীরএইউদ্যোগবাংলাদেশসুপ্রিমকোর্টেকয়েকমাসআগেআমারপ্রবর্তিত১২দফানির্দেশনারভিত্তিতে গড়েউঠেছে, যারলক্ষ্যহলজনগণ-কেন্দ্রিকবিচারপ্রদানব্যবস্থাস্থাপনএবংসাধারণজনগণেরজন্যদক্ষওদ্রুতসেবাপ্রদানকরা।

এইময়মনসিংহসেমিনারেরভূমিকাহবেসেইপ্রক্রিয়াকেআরোএগিয়েনিয়েযাওয়া।

অন্যকথায়, আমাদেরএখনআমাদেরসংস্কারপ্রচেষ্টাগুলোরস্থায়িত্বনিশ্চিতকরারউপায়গুলোঅন্বেষণএবংনির্ধারণকরতেহবে।আসুন, জেলাবিচারবিভাগএবংম্যাজিস্ট্রেসিতাদেরনিজনিজভূমিকায়সংস্কারকএবংউদ্ভাবকহিসেবেআত্মপ্রকাশকরুকএবং২১সেপ্টেম্বর, ২০২৫-এআমারঅভিভাষণেউপস্থাপিতসংস্কারকর্মসূচিরমুখপাত্রহিসেবেদায়িত্বপালনকরুক।

সামনেরসপ্তাহএবংমাসগুলোজেলাবিচারবিভাগএবংম্যাজিস্ট্রেসিরজন্যঅত্যন্তগুরুত্বপূর্ণ।তাদেরযৌথপ্রচেষ্টাপ্রতিষ্ঠানগতস্বায়ত্তশাসনএবংসংস্কারেরভবিষ্যতপথকেপ্রভাবিতওপরিচালিতকরবে।এইসংস্কাররোডশোগুলোযেভাবেসাফল্যেরসাথেসম্পন্নহয়েছে, সেগুলোআপনাদেরজন্যউপযুক্তপ্রক্রিয়াএবংচ্যানেলেরমাধ্যমেএগিয়েনিয়েযাওয়ারবিষয়বস্তুওযৌক্তিকভিত্তিপ্রদানকরেছে।
আমারবার্তাপরিষ্কার: দায়িত্বনিন।
আমিআশাকরি, এইবার্তাসমানভাবেসারাদেশেশক্তিশালীভাবেপ্রতিধ্বনিতহবে।

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The resolute spirit of the student-led revolution of July and August 2024 catalyzed our collective will to oust oppression and restore justice and equality. This, along

with the defining moments in our history, i.e., the language movement of 1952 and the war of independence of 1971, remind us that the quest for justice is not a fleeting endeavor but a lifelong commitment, a commitment that forms the bedrock of our judicial mission.

It is in that spirit thaton September 21, 2024, I unveiled a comprehensive **Roadmap for Judicial Reform**. This initiative is a cornerstone of my vision to strengthen our judiciary and its capacity to serve the people with integrity and efficiency.

As part of my commitment to institutional reform and total independence of the judiciary, I have already taken decisive steps to establish the foundations for the true separation of powers. This is significantly evident in the fully operational Judicial Appointment Council and Supreme Judicial Council, two autonomous internal bodies of the Supreme Court presided over by the Chief Justice of Bangladesh, and as are now overseeing the recruitment and the removal respectively of Supreme Court Judges totally free from executive interference.I have declared and initiated the process of creating a **separate Secretariat for the Judiciary**, a pivotal measure to ensure the judiciary's administrative autonomy. Alongside this, I have proposed a comprehensive set of **Posting and Transfer Guidelines for District Judiciaries**, aimed at fostering consistency and fairness in judicial postings.

Dear Participants,

The timing of this Seminar, the 5th in the Series and the 4th held outside of the capital, is critical in several ways. Firstly, it has the advantage to take stock of all ideas mooted or building blocks introduced thus far in this Seminar Series.

Secondly, it takes place at a juncture coinciding with a national endeavour at striking a political consensus on key sectoral reform proposals.

Here we would do well to remind ourselves that the Judiciary has had a headstart from September 2024 onwards in proposing and implementing its reform agenda spearheaded by the Supreme Court wherever possible. Furthermore, the Judiciary's extensive and detailed proposals on sectoral reform have been shared with key reform commissions and are reflected in their suggested proposals that are now being placed before the Nation.

Thirdly, and this is now a matter of paramount importance, I believe that our Reform Roadshows aided by our strategic partner the UNDP have now gained a momentum of their own where District Judiciaries and Judicial Magistracies countrywide feel emboldened and empowered to claim ownership of the reform agenda, and rightfully so. A case in point is the setting up between 10 and 12 February, 2025 of Helplines in the Rajshahi District & Sessions, and Metropolitan Sessions Courts as well as the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court clearly modelled after and inspired by the very successful Supreme Court Helpline. Significantly further, the Rajshahi initiative is predicated on the Chief Justice's 12-point Guidelines introduced at the Supreme Court several months ago with a view to establishing a people-centric justice delivery system providing efficient, quick, and corruption-free service to litigants and the public at large. The role of this Mymensigh Seminar will be to carry that process forward.

In other words, we have now to explore and chart out avenues for ensuring the sustainability of our reform exercises. Let, therefore, individual judiciaries and magistracies assume roles of reformists and innovators and indeed be mouthpieces for the reform agenda put forth in the CJB's Obhibhashon of 21 September, 2024.

The weeks and months ahead remain crucial for the district judiciaries and magistracies collectively influencing and directing the future course of institutional autonomy and reform. These Reform Roadshows so successfully undertaken have provided the content and rationale for you to pursue these through appropriate processes and channels. I hope that this common quest for reform shall be, indeed must be, a unifying factor to help bring about an entrenched political will to usher in remaining structural reform.

My message to you, therefore, is clear, take charge. I hope that this message shall resonate equally forcefully throughout the country.

Dear Participants,

To reiterate, the Supreme Court within the span of only the past six months or so is already invested with the powers and autonomous mechanisms for the recruitment, discipline, and removal of Supreme Court judges. This has brought a sea change in how the judiciary perceives itself and how it is viewed as an assertive, confident, and rejuvenated principal organ of the state. These, I firmly believe, are also key steps taken to a more formal separation of the judiciary from the executive and the legislature and the final and total vesting of all outstanding powers in the Supreme Court to administer and oversee all matters of judicial administration not the least of which is the Supreme Court's constitutional relationship with the local or district judiciaries and judicial magistracies.

Ladies and Gentlemen

My mission ,- our mission-, is clear and that is to establish a judiciary that serves the people which can only materialize through judicial policies conceived, devised, and freely implemented by a fully independent judiciary. It is my ardent hope that

you shall stand by me in this collective and fully participatory endevour and claim equal ownership of the same during this crucial and defining period of our institutional history and indeed much beyond.

Thank you.