

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

**05/04/2025**

**Venue: Hotel Grand palace, Rangpur**

**Honorable Chair, Mr Justice Zafor Ahmed, Judge of the High Court Division  
of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh and Member of the Supreme Court  
Special Committee for Judicial Reform,**

**Mr Justice Abu Taher Md. Saifur Rahman, honorable Judge, High Court  
Division, Supreme Court of Bangladesh.**

**Esteemed British High Commissioner to Bangladesh H.E. Ms Sarah Cook  
Resident Representative of UNDP Bangladesh, Mr. Stefan Liller,& Assistant  
Resident Representative of UNDP Mr Anowarul Haque**

**Registrar General of Bangladesh Supreme Court**

**Senior District and Sessions Judge, Rangpur, Kurigram and Lalmonirhat  
Metropolitan Sessions Judge, Rangpur**

**Registrar, Appellate Division, Supreme Court of Bangladesh**

**Distinguished Members of District Judiciary Rangpur, Kurigram and  
Lalmonirhat**

**Respected President and Secretary of the District Bar Association of Rangpur  
Government Pleader and Public Prosecutor of Rangpur**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

**Good Morning**

সুধী,

আজকের এই সেমিনারের, যা ধারাবাহিকতায় ৬ষ্ঠ এবং রাজধানীর বাইরে আয়োজিত ৫ম সেমিনার, এবং বিশেষভাবে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ তিনটি কারণে।

প্রথমত, এটি আগের সব সেমিনারে আমারউত্থাপিত ধারণা ও প্রস্তাবগুলো পর্যালোচনা করার সুযোগ করে দিচ্ছে।

দ্বিতীয়ত, এই সেমিনার এমন এক সময়ে অনুষ্ঠিত হচ্ছে যখন জুলাই ২০২৪ উত্তর নতুন বাংলাদেশে বিভিন্ন খাতে সংস্কারের জন্য রাজনৈতিক ঐক্যমত্য গঠনের প্রচেষ্টা চলছে। বিচার বিভাগ ইতোমধ্যে ২০২৪ সালের সেপ্টেম্বর থেকে সংস্কার কার্যক্রমে নেতৃত্ব দিচ্ছে, যা সংশ্লিষ্ট কমিশনগুলোর কাজেও প্রতিফলিত হয়েছে।

তৃতীয়ত, UNDP-এর সহযোগিতায় আয়োজিত আমাদের সংস্কার রোডশো গুলো এখন শক্তিশালী অবস্থানে পৌঁছেছে। ফলে জেলা বিচার বিভাগ ও ম্যাজিস্ট্রেটসি তাদের নিজস্ব সংস্কার কার্যক্রমের দায়িত্ব নিতে সক্ষম হয়েছে। উদাহরণ হিসেবে বলতে চাই, গত ফেব্রুয়ারি মাসে রাজশাহী জেলা আদালতে নতুন হেল্পলাইন চালু করা হয়েছে, যা সুপ্রিম কোর্টের সাফল্য দ্বারা অনুপ্রাণিত হয়েছে।

রাজশাহীর এই উদ্যোগ বিচারপ্রক্রিয়াকে আরও জনগণমুখী করতে আমার দেওয়া ১২ দফা নির্দেশনার আলোকে গড়ে উঠেছে।

এই রংপুর সেমিনার সংস্কার প্রক্রিয়াকে আরও এগিয়ে নিয়ে যাওয়ার জন্য একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ পদক্ষেপ। এখন আমাদের সংস্কার প্রচেষ্টাগুলো টেকসই করার উপায় খুঁজতে হবে।

আমরা আশা করি, জেলা বিচার বিভাগ ও ম্যাজিস্ট্রেটসি সংস্কারের অগ্রদূত হিসেবে দায়িত্ব পালন করবে এবং ২১ সেপ্টেম্বর, ২০২৪-এ আমার অভিভাষণে উপস্থাপিত সংস্কার কর্মসূচির প্রতিনিধিত্ব করবে।

সামনের দিনগুলো বিচার বিভাগের জন্য খুবই গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। আমাদের যৌথ প্রচেষ্টাই ভবিষ্যতের সংস্কারের গতিপথ নির্ধারণ করবে। এখন সময় এসেছে, এই রোডশোগুলো থেকে পাওয়া শিক্ষা কাজে লাগিয়ে এগিয়ে যাওয়ার।

**সম্মানিত উপস্থিতি,**

বিচারিক সংস্কার শুধু বিভিন্ন খাতভিত্তিক সংস্কারের স্থায়িত্বের মূল চাবিকাঠিই নয়, বরং এটি এখন নিজেই "সংস্কার" শব্দের প্রতীক হয়ে উঠেছে। বিচার বিভাগ হল রাষ্ট্রের একমাত্র অঙ্গ, যা বছর দশক ধরে নিজের অভ্যন্তরীণ সংস্কারের জন্য সক্রিয়ভাবে প্রচেষ্টা চালিয়ে আসছে। এই দাবির কেন্দ্রে রয়েছে নিজেদের সংস্কার কর্মসূচি নিজেরাই নির্ধারণ ও বাস্তবায়নের ক্ষমতা ও কর্তৃত্ব। গত আট মাসে এই প্রচেষ্টা অভূতপূর্ব গতি অর্জন করেছে। এখন লক্ষ্য হল সেই উদ্দেশ্য পূরণ করা এবং তা যেন ভবিষ্যতেও টিকে থাকে তা নিশ্চিত করা। একটি প্রতিষ্ঠান হিসেবে, আমরা কখনও ক্ষমতার পূর্ণ পৃথকীকরণের লক্ষ্যের এতটা কাছাকাছি আসিনি। যদি এই সুযোগ কোনভাবে নষ্ট হয়, তবে তা বিচার বিভাগের মর্যাদা, অখণ্ডতা এবং প্রাসঙ্গিকতার জন্য চরম ক্ষতিকর হবে।

তাই, আমার বার্তা পরিষ্কার: দায়িত্ব নিন।

আমি আশা করি, এই বার্তা সমানভাবে সারা দেশে শক্তিশালী ভাবে প্রতিধ্বনিত হবে।

**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. In this sacred journey, we bow our heads in remembrance of Martyr Abu Sayed from Rangpur, a brave son of this soil who laid down his life during the July revolution. His sacrifice is not just a chapter in history; it is a living

flame in our hearts, urging us to dream of a fairer world and to never falter in our fight for justice.

It is in that spirit that on 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 taken decisive steps to lay the foundations for the true separation of powers. This is clearly reflected in the establishment of the Judicial Appointment Council and the Supreme Judicial Council, two autonomous internal bodies of the Supreme Court, presided over by the Chief Justice of Bangladesh, now independently overseeing the recruitment and removal of Supreme Court Judges, free from any executive interference.

To further solidify judicial autonomy, I have initiated the process of creating a separate Secretariat for the Judiciary, a crucial step toward ensuring full administrative independence. Additionally, I have proposed comprehensive Posting and Transfer Guidelines for the District Judiciary, ensuring fairness and consistency in judicial postings.

Alongside these efforts, I have issued 12-point directives aimed at eliminating corruption within the judiciary. To enhance citizen access to justice, we have launched two helpline services, enabling direct communication and support for legal matters. The scope of online monitoring tools has been significantly expanded, including a paper-free case statement system and a judicial dashboard, ensuring greater efficiency and transparency.

Recognizing the urgent need to update judicial records, we have undertaken an initiative to update Personal Data Sheets of Judges in the District Judiciary, which had remained unchanged since 2015. Moreover, we have submitted several proposals to the government for the creation of dedicated Children's Courts, Special Magistrate Courts, Electricity Magistrate Courts, and others to address specific legal needs.

We have also introduced a paper-free bench in one Company Court Bench of the High Court Division and launched a paper-free requisition service in the Supreme Court, significantly reducing administrative paperwork and streamlining court operations.

This is a brief progress report I present before you, my constituents and our development partners. While we have made remarkable strides, we continue to explore and implement further initiatives to strengthen the judiciary and ensure a more transparent, efficient, and accessible justice system.

**Dear Participants,**

The timing of this Seminar, the 6th in the Series and the 5th 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 Rangpur 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.

**My dear Judges,**

Judicial Reform is not only the lynchpin for the sustainability of broad-based sectoral reform but it has emerged as the byword for reform itself.

The Judiciary is the only organ of the state that has for many decades now actively been seeking its own internal reform. Central to that demand is the ability and authority to decide for itself its own reform agenda. That endeavour has over the past eight months gained unprecedented momentum. The objective now is to fulfil that objective and ensure that it holds for the foreseeable future. We, as an institution, have never been closer to attaining the goal of absolute separation of powers. It would be calamitous to the dignity, integrity, and indeed relevance of the judiciary if this opportunity is squandered in any way.

**Dear Participants,**

To reiterate, the Supreme Court within the span of only the past half a year 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 endeavour and claim equal ownership of the same during this crucial and defining period of our institutional history and indeed much beyond.

**Thank you.**