

**Speech of Dr Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed, Hon'ble Chief Justice of Bangladesh in the Seminar titled 'July Uprising: Reform of the Judiciary ', Organised by Bangladesh Supreme Court Bar Association.**

**Venue: SCBA Auditorium, Date: 31 August 2025**

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**Chair of today's event, the President of SCBA**

**Judges of Appellate Division and High Court Division of the Supreme Court**

**Learned Attorney General for Bangladesh**

**Vice Chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council**

**Learned Senior Advocate of Supreme Court, Barrister Zamir Uddin Circar**

**Learned members of the SCBA**

**Members of Print and Electronic Media**

**Distinguished Guests**

**Ladies and Gentleman**

**Good Afternoon**

The Revolution of July 2024 ladies and Gentlemen, stands as a watershed in our history. It was the voice of a generation demanding liberty, dignity, and the restoration of justice as the foundation of our Nation. From those days of sacrifice came a message that no democratic renewal is possible without an independent judiciary, and that justice compromised is justice vandalised. It was in response to that call, on 21 September 2024, I as Chief Justice of Bangladesh declared my

roadmap of reform. That declaration was a pledge of self-examination, a commitment that the judiciary would reform itself from within. Since then, I have pursued with determination the strengthening of our autonomy, the streamlining of our service, and the renewal of our institutions. One of the most vital proposals placed before the government is for a distinct framework of judicial governance , the establishment of a separate Secretariat for the Supreme Court. We continue to pursue this with diligence, and we trust that in time a new law will cast light upon this endeavour, giving full expression to the constitutional vision of separation of powers.

### **Distinguished Guest,**

At the same time, the credibility of any judiciary rests upon the fairness of its appointments. It is here that we have seen a historic development, the enactment of the *Supreme Judicial Appointment Council Ordinance*, which has established a collegium-based system of judicial appointments. This is not a matter of formality; it is the foundation of legitimacy. For the first time, the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court has followed a transparent and participatory process, in line with the Latimer House Principles which guide the Commonwealth in balancing independence with accountability. The fruits of this reform are already evident. We have witnessed two intakes under this system: the first, in the Appellate Division, where appointments were made on clear and fair principles; the second, only days ago, in the High Court Division, where new judges were sworn in under the same transparent standard. These appointments have restored public confidence in the impartiality of judicial selection and assured our younger generation that merit will be recognised and integrity rewarded.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Independence, however, demands not only fairness in appointment but discipline in conduct. In this respect, the restoration of the Supreme Judicial Council after the disposal of the 16th Amendment Review Case has been pivotal. The Council has resumed its constitutional functions, and with resolve has already taken up matters of judicial discipline. In recent months, it has investigated, examined, and where necessary, acted against misconduct. This demonstrates to the people that independence does not mean immunity, and that the judiciary will hold itself accountable to the highest standards of propriety.

**Dear Guests,**

Building upon these constitutional reforms, we have also taken administrative measures to secure clarity and order. The first is the Rule governing the posting of members of the Judicial Service to Law and Justice Division. For years, deputations risked blurring the line between judiciary and executive, casting shadows over independence. This Rule has now established a principled, time-bound, and transparent process, ensuring that such postings are regulated and subject to safeguards. The second, the Judicial Service Construction Rule, has for the first time given the authority of creation of the posts of the Judges to the Supreme Court, and codified the structure of judicial service. Recruitment, training, promotion, all are now defined by law rather than discretion. This strengthens morale, guarantees fairness, and protects officers from arbitrary treatment. Together, these Rules mark a decisive advance in the institutional development of the judiciary, bringing it a notch closer to true institutional autonomy.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Reform, however, is not confined to statutes and ordinances. It is a living process that must be carried to the people. That is why I have taken my reform roadmap on the road. From Chattogram to Rajshahi, from Sylhet to Khulna, from Rangpur to Mymensingh, we have engaged in reform roadshows where Bench and Bar came together with citizens in open dialogue. In each division, the district Bars stood as partners, helping us measure pendency, debate procedural bottlenecks, and craft solutions rooted in local realities. These dialogues have reminded us that reform cannot be written from the capital alone; it must be practised across the nation.

Among the reforms one of the most discussed in these gatherings is the progress toward dedicated Commercial Courts. In a global economy, justice in commerce is as vital as justice in liberty. We have heard the frustrations of businessmen, entrepreneurs, and investors who suffered from delays. To meet this challenge, we are proposing specialised courts with trained judges, digital filing, and expedited procedure. Draft framework is in hand, preps are being readied, and stakeholder consultation has already begun. These courts if constructed, will help Bangladesh compete regionally, attract investment, and build confidence that contracts made in our land will be enforced swiftly and fairly.

None of this would have been possible without the collaboration of the Bar. Across the districts, the Bar Associations have walked with us, proving that reform is not the task of judges alone. And here, in Dhaka, the Supreme Court Bar Association has been our closest ally. The SCBA has stood hand in hand with the Bench, not merely as advocates before us but as partners beside us, supporting consultations,

embracing discipline, and shouldering responsibility for the credibility of justice. The Bar Council too, under the stewardship of the Attorney General and the Vice Chairman, has shown national leadership. Their vision has aligned the profession with the judiciary's reform, ensuring that Bench and Bar stand in harmony as twin guardians of justice.

The uprising of July 2024, ladies and gentlemen, placed a mirror before us. The roadmap of September was my answer. The reform proposals sent to the government, the creation of the Judicial Appointment Council, the restoration of the Supreme Judicial Council, the adoption of the two sets of Rules, the reform roadshows across the country, the preparation of Commercial Courts, all are proof that we have chosen reform in deed and not in word. Today, I can say with conviction that nearly eighty percent of this mission has already been accomplished, and the remaining steps are within our determined reach.

To conclude, Let us, then, continue this covenant with courage. Ladies and Gentlemen, we have to complete the process of aninstitutional complete autonomy. We have to deepen transparency in appointments, sustain discipline in conduct, and extend reform to every court of the Nation. I must assure our people that the judiciary of Bangladesh is trying hard to reclaim its independence, its discipline, and its purpose. And with that independence, we pledge to serve with fairness, with courage, and with the integrity the people deserve.

**Thank you.**