

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

**25/01/2025**

**Venue: Dusai, Moulvibazar**

**Honorable Chair, Mr. Justice Md Ashfaquul Islam, Senior most judge of the  
appellate Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh and Chairman of the  
Supreme Court Special Committee for Judicial Reform**

**Assistant Resident Representative of UNDP Bangladesh, Mr. Anowarul  
Haque**

**Senior Rule of Law, Justice and Security Adviser of UNDP Ms. Romana  
Schweiger**

**Registrar, High Court Division, Bangladesh Supreme Court**

**Senior District Judge & Metropolitan Sessions Judge, Sylhet,**

**Senior District Judge Moulvibazar and Habiganj**

**Distinguished Members of District Judiciaries of Sylhet, Moulvibazar and  
Habiganj**

**Respected President and Secretary of the District Bar Association**

**Moulvibazar**

**Government Pleader and Public Prosecutor of District Judge Court**

**Moulvibazar**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

**Good Morning**

I begin by honoring the memory of the martyrs of 1971, whose sacrifices gave us an independent nation. We also remember the determined spirit of the student-led revolution of July and August 2024, which played a pivotal role in ending oppression and restoring justice, equality, and humanity. These moments in our history remind us that the fight for justice is not temporary but a lifelong responsibility, forming the foundation of our judicial mission.

When I had the distinct honor of taking the oath as the 25th Chief Justice of Bangladesh, I was deeply aware of the immense responsibility placed upon my shoulders. This role is not merely a position of leadership but a solemn trust bestowed by the people of this nation to uphold fairness, equity, and ensure access to justice for all, irrespective of their status or circumstances.

From the very moment of my appointment, I recognized the urgency of addressing the challenges that have long impeded the full realization of our judiciary's potential. To this end, on September 21, 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.

I am pleased to inform that the Judiciary has had a head start from August 2024 onwards to devising its own internal reformist policy blueprint and has provided substantial input that has informed much of the legal framework has institutional independence that is now being placed before the Nation.

As part of my commitment to institutional reform and strengthening the independence of the judiciary, I have taken decisive steps to establish the foundations for true separation of powers. 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 the formation of a **Judicial Appointment Council** to institutionalize transparency and meritocracy in the appointment process of apex court judges, as well as **Posting and Transfer Guidelines for District Judiciaries**, aimed at fostering consistency and fairness in judicial postings.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As you know, the Ordinance for the Judicial Appointment Council has been passed on January 21, 2025, just four months after I exposed the reform roadmap on September 21, 2024. This swift enactment reflects the untiring resolve of our judiciary and the support of our stakeholders in ensuring a transparent and merit-based judicial appointment process. The establishment of the Judicial Appointment Council marks a historic milestone in securing judicial independence. This achievement underlines our judiciary's commitment to upholding impartiality and fairness, pillars that are essential for sustaining public trust in the legal system.

Another significant development has been the renewed engagement with the newly constituted Supreme Judicial Council. This body, reorganized after the successful and expedited disposal of the review petition of the 16th Amendment case, stands as a testament to the judiciary's resolve to fortify its independence and institutional integrity. The Council's mandate to oversee judicial accountability has been reinvigorated, ensuring a judiciary that is transparent, accountable, and aligned with the highest ethical standards.

As we move ahead, the Supreme Court has issued a 12-point directive aimed at eradicating corruption and fostering a citizen-centric approach to delivering quick and quality judicial services. These directives prioritize transparency, efficiency, and inclusivity, ensuring that the judiciary serves as an ideal of hope for every citizen. Key measures include the simplification of procedural complexities, enhanced access to legal aid, and the adoption of technology to streamline case management.

A notable step in this direction has been the establishment of Supreme Court helpline. Initially launched with a single operator, the service has now expanded to include an additional operator, significantly enhancing its capacity. Over the past four months, the helpline has received over 1,000 legal queries and complaints, addressing citizens' pain and agony with empathy and efficiency. This initiative reflects our commitment to bridging the gap between justice and those who seek it, ensuring that the judiciary remains accessible to all, regardless of their socio-economic standing.

### **Distinguished Participants,**

It is better understood that Law's empire is defined by principles of fairness and justice. Our reform agenda aligns with these principles, striving to ensure that every citizen's rights are upheld and their voices heard. We also, highlighted the importance of delivering justice not only procedurally but also substantively, addressing the real grievances of the people. This perspective drives our efforts to create a judiciary that is both technically efficient and empathetic.

In terms of technological innovation, the Supreme Court's initiative to establish a paper-free company bench has demonstrated the potential of digitalization in

revolutionizing judicial processes. This success has paved the way for the broader implementation of similar innovations across other benches and within the district judiciary. By embracing technology, we aim to build a judiciary that is modern, efficient, and environmentally sustainable.

It is also pertinent to mention that we are actively planning, researching, and working towards the establishment of dedicated Commercial Courts as part of our ongoing judicial reform agenda. These courts aim to rationalize the resolution of commercial disputes, providing businesses with timely and efficient legal remedies. By fostering a more predictable and transparent legal framework, we seek to boost investor confidence and attract greater foreign direct investment (FDI). This initiative reflects our commitment to aligning the judiciary with the evolving needs of a dynamic economy while reinforcing Bangladesh's position as a competitive and investment-friendly destination.

**Esteemed members of the Judiciary and the Bar,**

The judiciary's role extends beyond dispute resolution; it is the guardian of constitutional rights and the rule of law. In our pursuit of judicial excellence, we have focused on key reforms which are contributing to strengthening the judiciary's independence and operational efficiency.

Moreover, the engagement of development partners, such as the UNDP, has been instrumental in advancing our reform initiatives. Their support provides us with the technical expertise and resources necessary to implement these transformative measures effectively. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our development partner UNDP, Bangladesh and its Resident Representative Mr. Stefan Liller, Assistant Resident Representative Mr. Anowarul Haq, and Senior Rule of Law, Justice and

Security Adviser of UNDP Ms. Romana Schweiger for their relentless support and invaluable contributions to advancing our reform agenda. Their dedication has been instrumental in driving our vision for a transformed judiciary.

I also wish to extend my deepest gratitude to the esteemed Supreme Court Special Committee for Judicial Reform, under the sagacious leadership of Justice Md Ashfaul Islam. Your innovative vision and untiring support have been a guiding inspiration throughout this transformative journey of reform. Truly, your dedication to justice and progress stands as an enduring demonstration to the noble ideals of our judiciary.

### **Honourable Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The July-August 2024 student-led Revolution revealed the heightened sense of constitutionalism and rule of law among today's youth. As we embark on a constructive engagement at establishing a new republican order, there is now felt the need to better acquaint the young and the motivated with the essentials of constitutionalism at an early stage in their academic careers. An introduction to civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights can, therefore, begin at an early stage to better prepare the youth to engage in the building a just society founded on a democratic order.

Innovation does not invariably mean the creation of the new but also devising the optimal utilisation of provisions and resources presently available. In this regard, certain provisions of Chapter I of Part VI of the Constitution, some of which are virtually lying dormant, come immediately to mind and need to be revisited given the altered realities on the ground. I draw the attention of the honourable Chairman of the Supreme Court Special Committee for Judicial Reform Mr. Justice Md. Ashfaul Islam to explore, for example, the optimum prospects and potential of

Article 98 on the appointment of additional judges to either division of the Supreme Court, and the holding of sessions of the High Court Division outside of the capital as per Article 100. Furthermore, and as when it is deemed to be propitious, rules may be devised to give effect to Article 107 clause (3) and (4) read together as truly reinforce the bicameral architecture of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh.

### **Dear Participants**

The ongoing Regional Seminar on Judicial Independence and Efficiency, currently being held in the Sylhet Division, marks a pivotal step in our collective journey towards shaping the strategic plan for the next five years of our judiciary. This seminar is an invaluable opportunity to engage in meaningful consultation and to incorporate your esteemed opinions into the foundation of this plan. The dialogue and insights gathered here will serve as a cornerstone for reform, and this consultative process will continue with equal fervor as we progress to the next divisions, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive approach to strengthening our judiciary for the future.

Our mission is clear and that is to establish a judiciary that truly serves the people. Justice must not remain confined to courtrooms but must extend to every corner of the nation. Through our collective efforts, we aim to create a judiciary that is independent, efficient, and aligned with the needs and aspirations of the people.

I conclude by reaffirming our collective dedication to the principles of justice, equality, and the rule of law. Together, we will continue to strengthen our judiciary, ensuring that it stands as an example of hope and accountability for all.

Thank you.