

**136<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly**  
**Inaugural ceremony**

**Speech**

by

**HE Sheikh Hasina**

Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

National Parliament Bhaban

Saturday

18 Chaitra 1423

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## **Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim**

The Chair of the inaugural ceremony,  
Hon'ble Speakers of IPU Member Parliaments,  
Hon'ble Members of Parliaments,  
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

**Assalamu Aliakum and a very good evening to you all.**

I am deeply honoured to be here this evening to inaugurate the 136<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly.

This is for the first time that Bangladesh is hosting such a big Conference like the IPU Conference. This is a matter of great honour for us. May I, therefore, take this opportunity to welcome all the distinguished guests to Bangladesh and wish you all a very pleasant and rewarding stay here.

We value our association with IPU, the global organization of national parliament, and are proud of our democratic heritage. We view and regard democracy not just as end itself but also as a means of ensuring prosperity and security for our people.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The journey of establishing democracy in Bangladesh was never a smooth one. The Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had struggled lifelong for realizing the people's rights and establishing democracy. He had to endure inhuman repression and persecution.

In 1970, Awami League, under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, won the general elections in the then Pakistan. Instead of transferring power to the people's representatives, the

Pakistani rulers imposed an uneven war on the innocent Bangalees. They launched one of the cruelest genocides in the human history on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 1971 in the name of Operation Searchlight. Bangabandhu declared independence of Bangladesh at the early hours of the 26th March 1971.

At the call of Bangabandhu, the whole Bangalee nation joined the resistance war against the Pakistani junta. We earned ultimate victory on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 1971 at the cost of 3 million lives and honour of 200 thousand women in the 9-month-long war of liberation.

As Bangabandhu was engaged in reconstructing the war-ravaged country, the defeated reactionary forces assassinated him along with most of his family members on the 15th August 1975. My younger sister and myself survived the assassination as we were abroad on the fateful night.

After the assassination of Bangabandhu, undemocratic military and autocratic rule got roots in the country. In 1979, I began a movement abroad against the military rule. After passing 6 years in exile, I returned home in 1981 and launched a vigorous movement for restoration of democracy. In 1986, I became a member of parliament for the first time and attended the IPU Conference as the Leader of the Opposition.

I had to endure huge persecution, including house arrest, imprisonment and even repeated attempts on my life. At least 19 attempts, including that of the 21<sup>st</sup> August gruesome grenade attack in 2004, were made on my life. The 21st August grenade attack left 22 people, including the president of my party's women wing, dead and over 500 injured. Thousands of leaders and workers of my party - Bangladesh Awami League - sacrificed their lives for realizing the rights to food and vote. But we never distracted from the struggle of

establishing democracy. I think that only democracy can ensure a prosperous life fulfilling the basic needs of the people.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The world, no doubt, is moving forward. Visible progress has also been made in hunger situation. But, nearly 800 million people still suffer from malnutrition. A large number of children of the developing nations suffer from stunted growth owing to lack of nutrition. They are deprived of medicare and schooling.

But the earth is filled with all resources for survival of mankind. A little sympathy, support, mutual compassion and fraternity can make the globe hunger-free easily.

The humanity is facing new vices. Terrorism and militancy are costing human lives. Peace is seriously impeded. Militancy is not a problem of a particular country now, but it's a global phenomenon. We have to fight this menace together, otherwise, we would be pushed back to the dark age.

The global climate change is a hot topic in various forums. I raise the issue before this august gathering because we are the worst sufferer from the adverse impact of climate change. The commitment made at different forums for offsetting the adverse impacts, I expect, would be met without delay.

**Dear audience,**

In Bangladesh, we have been working relentlessly to build a poverty-hunger-free, just, and non-communal democratic country. We have strengthened the democratic institutions, including the national parliament and local government bodies. Now, every tier of the local government bodies, including Union Council, upazilla Council, municipality, City Corporation and District Council are run by the elected representatives.

Independent and vibrant mass media act as watchdogs in democratic system. The mass media in Bangladesh expanded greatly during the last few years in one hand, and on the other, wide freedom has been ensured. People's right to information has also been ensured through enactment of Right to Information Act and establishment of Information Commission.

Bangladesh achieved tremendous success in socio economic fronts. The poverty rate is reduced to 22.4 percent in 2016 from 31.5 in 2010. Per capita income now stands at USD 1466 while average longevity rose to 72 years. Bangladesh has already been recognized as a lower middle-income country. Our target is to make Bangladesh a middle-income country by 2021 and a developed and prosperous one by 2041.

We have made ample success in implementation of MDGs. We are going forward to implement SDGs capitalizing the success of MDGs. The subjects of SDGs have been incorporated in our ongoing 7<sup>th</sup> five-year plan.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Our Hon'ble Speaker Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, MP, is the Chairperson of CPA and Hon'ble Member of Parliament Mr. Saber Hossain Chowdhury, MP, is the President of IPU.

It is indeed a matter of pride for us. This is also a testimony by the Hon'ble Members of the Parliament across the world towards our commitment to Democratic practices and values.

**Dear Participants,**

You are set to participate in various dialogues and meetings of the 136<sup>th</sup> conference of the IPU. I hope that your dialogue will produce fruitful recommendations on ways and means to eradicate poverty, establish world peace and overall welfare of the humanity. I would also like to request you to implement the recommendations in your own

countries. Only then, ours and yours hard labour will be meaningful and welfare of humanity will be ensured.

With these few words, I formally declare the 136<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly open.

Thank you all again.

Khoda Hafez.  
Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu  
May Bangladesh Live Forever.

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