

Role of Young Parliamentarians in Bangladesh

Hon'ble Chair of this session
Excellency's
Distinguished guest
Ladies and Gentlemen

Assala Malikum and very good ~~morning~~/afternoon to you all. First of all I would like to thank the IPU and the host parliament of Indonesia for giving us the opportunity to physically take part in the 144th IPU Assembly in this beautiful city of Nusa Dua, Bali. Let me take this opportunity to extend warm greetings and best wishes of the Leader of the House and Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina, Hon'ble Speaker of Bangladesh Parliament Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, MP and On behalf of my delegation Members to all the Participants of the 144th IPU Assembly.

Distinguished Guests,

We achieved our Independence in 1971 through a glorious liberation war under the leadership of our Father of the Nation Bangabhandu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. In our liberation war people of all walks of life had voluntarily participated. The youth had a glorious contribution in this liberation war. Therefore the indomitable spirit and inner strength of the youth is beyond description. The pages of history are also filled with the heroic songs of the youth.

Bangladesh Parliament has been the center of all political activities of the government. The Members of the Parliament has been playing a pioneering role in implementing the development of the present day government. Young people are often excluded or overlooked as political candidates. Politics is typically regarded as a space for politically experienced men. Young people are often systematically marginalized because of their young age. Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has a report where it says that people between the ages of 20 and 44 make up 57% of the world's voting age population but only 26% of the world's Members of Parliament (MP). Young people under the age of 30 represent 1.9% of the world's MPs and more than 80% of the world's upper houses of Parliament have no MPs aged under 30. While young people often play central and catalyzing roles in movements for democracy around the world, they are less engaged than older generation in voting and party activism.

Bangladesh is no exception to that. The youth are the future of the next generation believing this the present government under the dynamic leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is trying her best to engage the youth of the society in the Nation building activities. Therefore, keeping this in mind she has taken bold steps in giving a good number of young people her party nomination to contest National Parliamentary election.

Young Parliamentarians brings dynamism in their day to day activities. In theory MPs in Bangladesh have certain roles to play such as policy advocates, parliament scrutinisers and constituency members. Beyond these roles, MPs are simultaneously social and political beings when they play their informal role at the constituency level. Social relation does not arise suddenly and it does not appear through formal political events; It emerges over years of endless informal social interactions across his or her constituency. In the last two decades it has been observed that not all MPs are same; they have diverse interests and power according to their age, sex and political background.

It is crucial for understanding a MP's role and responsibility because it goes to the heart of the challenge of representation. Most of the MP's through different informal activities often visit their constituencies in order to build up their reputation and win support with very different group of people. The MP's efforts to win favour by performing proximity to the masses. Despite the diversity of both politicians and constituents, some aspects of these relationships cut across MPs' age, gender and Political background. Recognition of how MPs make choices between competing and conflicting interests within their constituency could enrich debates about their role but also democracy more generally.

I firmly believe that it is important to involve youth as key stakeholders and decision makers. There can be no strong democracy, no lasting peace and no substantial prosperity without the contribution of young people, who represent a major segment of the population all over the world. All societies need the power of youth to achieve a better future. Young people have a long life ahead of them and must consider the world from a long term perspective. This means the youth empowerment can enhance the sustainability of our communities and our world. We emphasize the need for democracy to be more representative of young people. It is my hope that the young people become part and parcel of all political decision making process at the legislative and governmental level as well as at the national and local level. For this we need to start youth empowerment in politics in the early years of schooling. As Parliamentarians we have a critical role to play in ensuring the balanced and inclusive participation of the youth in Parliamentary and Political arenas.

With this hope I conclude my speech. Thank you all for giving a patient hearing.

Joy Bangla.