



Bangladesh

MEDIA RELEASE

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New Boost to Parliament's Vision of Strengthening the Foundations of Democracy

Dhaka - To translate the vision of '*strengthening the foundations of parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh*' into reality, the National Parliament today began a process of parliamentary strengthening and development that will assist the Parliament fulfill its role as the legislative, representative and oversight body according to the Constitution of Bangladesh.

The process of strengthening the Parliament will be implemented through a development project titled 'Improving Democracy through Parliamentary Development', which is a joint initiative of the Parliament, the Government of Bangladesh, and the UN Development Programme (UNDP). The project which has a total budget of US\$ 11.9 million (approximately 83 crore taka) for the next four years is funded by UNDP and the Government of the Netherlands.

The project is based on the key concept that a strong parliament is essential to maintaining the rule of law, protecting human rights, overseeing transparent governance processes, improving the state of the extremely poor and meeting MDG commitments. The project is designed to support reform initiatives led by the Parliament, which will, overtime, impact on all people in Bangladesh through improved law making, efficient and accountable governance, improved service delivery and policy making and more effective representation and community engagement.

"The presence of an effective parliament in Bangladesh is strongly correlated with the existence of a viable democracy because it has the capacity to empower ordinary people to participate in the policies that shape their lives", said H. E. Mr. A.J.A.J.M.G. Hennekens, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The project will assist the Parliament achieve its reform agenda and strategic objectives in the key areas of Parliament Secretariat support to all Members, Parliamentary scrutiny and oversight particularly through the work of its Standing Committees. The project will also strengthen the Parliament in the areas of research, information support and ICT resources and it will build mechanisms which allow the Parliament to engage more effectively with the public and other stakeholders.

UNDP Bangladesh Resident Representative, a.i. Stefan Priesner recognized the importance of the project and its bipartisan support noting that both parties campaigned to strengthen parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh. As a result he said "the people of Bangladesh have very high hopes and expectations of the ninth parliament to improve the delivery of essential services to all communities, ensure economic growth and security, job creation and rural development. We also recognize what a huge challenge the government and the Parliament faces in meeting public expectations."

The Bangladesh Parliament is a unicameral legislature consisting of 300 directly elected seats and 45 reserve seats for women elected by the directly elected members of parliament. The current parliament also has more than half of its Members serving for the first time and 19 directly elected female parliamentarians, the highest number since the country's independence.

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