



**Address by Chief Guest Mr. Md Anwarul Iqbal**  
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Government of Bangladesh

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South Asia Regional Workshop on  
**Transparency and Integrity in the Water Sector**  
Concluding Session, November 5, Dhaka

Mr. Chairman,  
H. E. the Ambassador of the Netherlands  
Excellencies, Distinguished Participants, Members of the Media, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking the organizers of the South Asia Regional Workshop on Transparency and Integrity in the Water Sector, for giving me the opportunity to attend this concluding session. When I heard about this first ever initiative of this kind in the region I became keen to learn about its proceedings with particular interest in recommendation and follow-up actions. Therefore I appreciate this opportunity given to me by Transparency International Bangladesh and Water Intergity Network.

On behalf of the Government I extend warm greetings to all participants of the workshop coming from the South Asian countries and beyond. From the presentation we just heard I am convinced that you had passed three days of very productive deliberations. We in the Government will give due importance to the findings and recommendations of the workshop, and possible follow-up actions. As a co-stakeholder in your efforts to improve transparency and accountability in the water sector we will do our best to working with and facilitating any initiatives to strengthen good governance, accountability and transparency.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I think that this workshop is a very timely initiative. As a member of the Caretaker Government I take pride for our efforts to turn around the shackles of corruption and creating an institutional and policy environment for establishing transparent and accountable governance in the country. The Government is determined to create a sound and sustainable policy and institutional foundation to effectively control corruption and promoting accountable, transparent and pro-people governance in the country.

As you may be aware with effect from November 1, we have completed the process of establishing independence of the judiciary, which, we understand is the key to effectiveness of any and every other institution of democracy and rule of law. Among other initiatives by the Government to institutionalize democracy I should also mention the reconstitution of the Election Commission, reform and reconstitution of the Anti-

corruption Commission, reconstitution of the Public Service Commission and ratification of the UN Convention against Corruption.

The Government remains firmly committed to ensure the due judicial process with regard to the cases of corruption, and to hold genuinely free and fair elections before the end of 2008. We are determined to ensure level-playing field in the elections, free from the influence of corruption and black money, so that the nation gets a parliament that would be effective enough to ensure accountability of the government.

I commend the workshop participants for bringing into focus the whole range of issues, challenges, entry points of corruption and integrity lapse in the water sector. It is also satisfying that you have gone beyond diagnosing the problems and came up with range of recommendations for consideration of the various stakeholders.

Water is indispensable for life, living and development. The water sector also attracts one of the largest allocations of financial resources in the public sector – for water resource management and for provision of basic sanitation and personal hygiene.

I agree that the more the resources, the more is the possibility of corruption and integrity lapse. This is the reason the government has given, and will continue to give, top priority to mainstreaming integrity and transparency.

I should add that reducing corruption is not a monopoly of the government. It must be backed by integrity and due diligence of other stakeholders, especially in politics, public service, business, intelligentsia and civil society.

We have to change the culture of impunity and stop the scope of violation of the laws, including abuse of, and encroachment into, water bodies which have been pervasive. My Ministry has already initiated many specific steps to stop unplanned, unauthorized and illegal land-based activities in and around the aquatic ecosystem and ecologically critically area.

In this context, however, a highly important role can be played by public awareness and engagement. No amount of Government efforts can succeed to improve the content and quality of water supply and sanitation unless the citizens at large and civil society actors, particularly NGOs, Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and other local level citizens groups come forward to play the oversight role.

Water is a matter of right, and like any other aspect of life this right has to be asserted loudly and firmly. I do think that there should be a social movement against corruption in the water sector. The objective of such social efforts should be to create demand for integrity and transparency and exert organized and effective pressures upon the private as well as private sector. Parallel with regional and national level initiatives, therefore, it will be most appropriate to design and develop various tools of grassroots level participatory and social accountability such as social audit and reports cards.

The service providers, local administration, public representatives, other key actors and stakeholders, especially citizens at the service-receiving end must work together in order

to bring positive changes in service providing institutions. The Government is fully committed to listening to the voices and concerns of the people and act upon the same in mainstreaming transparency and accountability in the water sector. In order to ensure people's access to water supply and sanitation and to establish an accountable and transparent mechanism of service delivery in this sector we have already started developing a citizen's charter for a number of service providing institutions such as: Dhaka WASA and Chittagong WASA. I personally would like to explore other follow-ups, including application of social accountability tools with a participatory approach in this vital cross-cutting sector of water supply and sanitation as well as water resource management.

Apart from formulating citizen's charter for both the water authorities, Government, as you might be aware, has formed a committee to strengthen local government bodies (LEBs) in improving the effectiveness of their service delivery in different sectors including water supply and sanitation and in ensuring their accountability and transparency in the management of local government affairs. The Committee has, through a process of wide-ranging discussions with almost all segments of the populace, prepared a draft report in this behalf. The Government is now planning to convene a conference to be held later in this month for all the UP Chairmen, female UP members, Paurashava Chairmen and Commissioners of City Corporations to solicit their feedback and suggestions. It is a landmark step to ensure their participation, through which the Government is very keen to demonstrate its commitment in establishing a mechanism of transparency in decision making process that affect the people.

I have been particularly impressed by the outcome of this workshop in terms of opening up of opportunities for mutual sharing and learning from challenges as well as good practices within the participating countries and across the region as well.

Before I conclude, I thank you again very much for this important initiative. I will look forward to be a partner in any follow-up initiatives that may be undertaken.

Thank you very much and my best wishes to you all, and especially to foreign participants, I wish you safe trip back.

**Allah Hafiz.**