

**Symposium on**  
**Local Government: Reflections on Agenda for Reform**  
**Date: February 02, 2019**  
**Venue: BILIA Auditorium**

Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BILIA) holds a symposium on “Local Government: Reflections on Agenda for Reform” on Saturday, February 02, 2019, at 10:30 a.m. at BILIA Auditorium. The symposium was presided over by Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman, Executive Chairman, PPRC and former Advisor, Caretaker Government of Bangladesh. Two papers pertaining to the symposium title were presented respectively by Professor Salahuddin M. Aminuzzaman, Department of Public Administration, University of Dhaka, and Professor Tofail Ahmed, Vice Chancellor, Britannia University, Cumilla. The programme was launched as Dr. Rumana Islam, Assistant Director of BILIA addressed a welcome speech to the audience.

Mr. Salahuddin started his presentation by indicating some global experiences in Local Government (LG) system, where this system has been viewed as the efficient delivery agent of key social and economic services, effective partner in delivering pro-poor public services and achieving pro-poor economic growth, and as a system which can improve democratic, participatory, and accountable governance. Later on, he focused on the progress and achievements of local government system in the context of Bangladesh and showed a statistics based on the daily newspaper where a gradual increase is vivid in the Government’s allocation for the local government, although it is somewhat lower in amount in 2016-17 compared to 2015-16 fiscal year. Mr. Salahuddin then discussed the commitments made in the ‘7<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan’ as well as in the ‘Vision 2021’ by the Government of Bangladesh which are either ignored or not fulfilled, such as- a Local Government Legal Framework (LGLF), a comprehensive tax sharing formula, the empowerment of Planning Commission to issue guidelines for local level plan, a prudent decentralisation programme, devolution of power, function, and fiscal authority to local government, establishment of a powerful autonomous local government body, and revival of the Local Government Commission etc. Mr. Salahuddin concludes his presentation by requesting the government not to further the promises, rather to concentrate on the proper implementation of the already pronounced intervention packages like SFYP and Vision 2021.

After that, Mr. Tofail Ahmed presented his paper on the topic of the symposium. He opened a comparative discussion on the local government system by taking into consideration the practices in Bangladesh, India, Switzerland and South Africa. The existing sub-national administrative structure of Bangladesh as well as the former strong local government system was shown in his presentation. He showed in his presentation the gradual development local government system in India and its place in Indian Constitution. The three C’s Government system of Switzerland (Confederation, Canton, and Commune) and three spheres of South African Government (Centre, State and Municipalities) were discussed elaborately. Mr. Tofail proposed ten major reform agenda in his presentation, such as- Local government framework law, reform/reorganization of field administration, electoral reform in LGIs, New

parliamentary organization for LGIs, LG finance/transfers/Tax sharing etc. He further discussed thoroughly the existing voting system in national and local government election, proposed uniform local government election model, new parliamentary structure of local governed institutions, functions of various LG units etc.

In the concluding remarks as Chair of the Symposium, Dr. Hussain Zillur Rahman opined that, ‘disempowerment’ of the root level of the government is visible in the current local government context, which holds it back from being effective in local administration. He observed the local government system as the fertile source of creating future leaders of the country. Mr. Rahman also suggested allocating more funds to make local government a bit operative. The Symposium was overwhelmed by the Participants from different sectors like lawyers, judges, human rights activists, journalists and students. Valuable feedbacks and recommendations were given during the open discussion by experts from different fields.

The report also published in the ‘Law and Justice’ page of the Daily Observer: ([http://www.observerbd.com/details.php?id=182396&fbclid=IwAR0UEy6W9RL16IfsvmZtDL5i4H\\_LNSF3gK2qC5k3CkzHn7Co43nbgDn7q-4](http://www.observerbd.com/details.php?id=182396&fbclid=IwAR0UEy6W9RL16IfsvmZtDL5i4H_LNSF3gK2qC5k3CkzHn7Co43nbgDn7q-4))

**The event is covered by**

**Muhammad Zubair**

**Research Assistant**

**Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BILIA)**