



National Legal Aid Day

28 April 2013

National Legal Aid Services Organization

Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs

গরিব দুঃখীর মামলার ব্যয়
বাংলাদেশ সরকার দেয়



President

People's Republic of Bangladesh
Dhaka

15 Baishakh 1420
28 April 2013

I am happy to learn that the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs is going to celebrate the 'National Legal Aid Day-2013'. I welcome this initiative.

Ensuring justice to all is one of the most important responsibilities of a modern welfare State. All, rich and poor, are equal in the eye of law. Poverty and social helplessness cannot stand as a barrier to justice. The State is to take responsibility for those who are incapable of taking shelter to justice due to financial or social limitations. The present Government is providing legal assistance to the poor, destitute and helpless litigants at its own expense as a part of responsibility. There has been tremendous progress in providing Government legal aid service over the last four years. As a result, the number of legal aid beneficiaries under the programme is increasing day by day.

Declaring specifically "National Legal Aid Day" is an appreciable step of the Government. Therefore, I believe the slogan "Garib Dukhir Mamlar Byay, Bangladesh Sarkar Dey" (Cost of the poor and destitute litigants are borne by the Government of Bangladesh) for this year's has been aptly chosen. Moreover, I think the poor and disadvantaged people will be more aware of their legal rights and facilities provided to them by the State.

I wish 'National Legal Aid Day-2013' a success.

Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Md. Abdul Hamid

Md. Abdul Hamid



Minister

Ministry of Law, Justice and
Parliamentary Affairs
Government of the People's
Republic of Bangladesh

15 Baishakh 1420
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Justice has been given utmost importance in the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh like all other democratic countries of the world. All are equal before the law and entitled to equal protection of the law. But, a large number of people are being deprived of getting the benefit of law and justice due to poverty, insolvency and other social barriers. In this backdrop, the Government of Bangladesh has enacted "Legal Aid Services Act, 2000" and established a statutory body National Legal Aid Services Organization to provide legal support to the poor, destitute, helpless and impoverished people. We have now been providing legal aid services to the poor, helpless and destitute justice seekers of the society through establishing permanent 'Legal Aid Office' at the districts and forming legal aid committees at the districts, upazilas and unions.

"Government Legal Aid Service" is a public welfare programme. The present democratic Government is very much sincere to upgrade the legal aid activities in the society. Declaring a separate day as "National Legal Aid Day" and celebrating it with due solemnity is a reflection of the Government's sincerity. We are committed to make the Government legal aid service more effective ensuring the quality legal services to the poor and underprivileged. The Day's slogan 'Garib Dukhir Mamlar Byay, Bangladesh Sarkar Dey' (cost of poor and destitute litigants are borne by the Government of Bangladesh) bears the testimony of such commitment. Hence, I believe with the observance of the 'National Legal Aid Day' this year, the poor and destitute people will be well aware of their rights and interests.

But it has been a great challenge for the Government ahead to establish rule of law and justice in the society. We, therefore, seek the cooperation and support of the all concerned public and private organizations and institutions including the judges, lawyers, civil society, NGOs and development partners.

I wish every success of the 'National Legal Aid Day-2013'.

Barrister Shafique Ahmed

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Secretary (In-charge)

Law and Justice Division
Ministry of Law, Justice and
Parliamentary Affairs
Government of the People's
Republic of Bangladesh

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The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh is a unique charter of the rule of law, human rights, justice and equality. Despite the poor and affluent being treated equally under the Constitution, the poor remain deprived of legal protection because of various socio-economic barriers. A large number of people cannot go to the Court of law to establish their legal rights due to financial crisis. The present pro-people and pro-poor Government passed the Legal Aid Services Act, 2000 during its previous tenure with an aim to facilitate justice and rule of law for litigants who are incapable of seeking justice due to financial insolvency, destitution, helplessness and for various socio-economic conditions. The present democratic Government has successfully catered the public welfare and service-oriented Government legal aid programmes at the grassroots. Besides the financially weak, legal aid services are also provided to acid-victims, widows, abandoned wives, special need persons, trafficked women and children and other socio-economically incapable citizens at full Government expense. We have been able to establish separate Legal Aid Offices in the Districts at the present Government's graciousness. The poor people have already begun to receive the benefits of Government legal services through the District Legal Aid Offices.

Ensuring quality legal service to the poor people is a big challenge for the Government. The Government has declared April 28 as "National Legal Aid Day" to lay emphasis on ensuring justice for the poor and helpless litigants. We hope the first time celebration of the Day with the slogan "Garib Dukhir Mamlar Byay, Bangladesh Sarkar Dey" (Cost of the poor and destitute litigant is borne by the Government of Bangladesh) will be successful. I seek cooperation of judges and lawyers in the implementation of legal aid services of the Government.

I wish success to the celebration of "National Legal Aid Day".

Abu Saleh Sheikh Md. Zahirul Haque

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An Overview of Government Legal Aid Program

The Government of Bangladesh has enacted Legal Aid Services Act, 2000 with a view to providing legal aid to the poor and underprivileged. The Government established National Legal Aid Services Organization (NLASO) to implement the Government legal aid program. Under the chair of District & Session Judge, District Legal Aid Committee has been formed in each district. Upazila and Union Legal Aid Committee have also been formed at local level. The Government, with its own fund, is providing legal aid to the poor litigants who are incapable of seeking justice due to financial insolvency, destitution, helplessness and for various socio-economic conditions through District, Upazila & Union Legal Aid Committee.

Government Legal Aid Services

- Legal Advice
- Free Vocalatnama
- Provide Advocate to help in a legal proceeding
- Provide fees for the lawyers
- Provide fees for the mediator or arbitrator
- Supply copies of Order, Judgment etc with free of cost
- Provide the cost of DNA Test
- Provide the cost of paper advertisement in Criminal Case
- Any other relevant assistance or cost needed for a case

Government Legal Aid Service: 4 Years of Progress and Development

Despite constitutional rights guaranteeing every citizen equal rights before the law irrespective of poor or affluent, a large number of people remain deprived of justice because of financial constraints. The marginalized and underprivileged sections of the society often become victims of social injustice. The National Legal Aid Services Organization of Government of Bangladesh, in an effort to mitigate such hardships of the poor litigants, has introduced legal aid office in all districts. The legal aid offices are responsible to provide free legal services and advices to poor and helpless people. This has been a major achievement of the present Government of Bangladesh over the last four years. Let us take a look at some of the major tasks the NLASO has accomplished to ensure justice is duly served to the poor people.

Setting up National Legal Aid Services Organization

To make Government legal aid services instrumental, the present Government established the National Legal Aid Services Organization in 2000. Despite being established as statutory organization, the previous Government did not make it functional. Due to lack of human resources and office, the Government's legal aid services have been tremendously hindered. The present Government after assuming power has made the organization instrumental at delivering legal aid services to the poor and helpless people. The Government has appointed staffs, set up offices and other infrastructures to make the organization effective and functional.

Law and Policy Amendment

In order to make the Government legal aid services more effective, expeditious and pro-poor, amendments have been brought to the laws and policies related to legal aid. Through the enactment of Legal Aid Services (Amendment) Act, 2011, Chief Judicial Magistrate, Pourashabha Mayor and Upazila Chairman have been enlisted as members of the District committee. Also, to make Government legal aid services more accessible to the poor people, amendments have been brought even to the Legal Aid Services Regulation, 2001 by which an 'insolvent person's income limit has been increased from BDT 30,000 to BDT 50,000 and for freedom fighters from BDT 6,000 to BDT 75,000.

Increasing Fee for Panel Lawyers

To attract skilled and experienced lawyers to deal with cases pertaining to legal aid services, the Government has increased fees by manifold by amending the Legal Aid Services Regulation, 2001. The increment of fees has created a great deal of job motivation among the panel of lawyers.

Establishment of Permanent District Legal Aid Office

Legal Aid Offices have been set up in 64 districts to make the legal aid services more effective, expeditious and service-oriented. Position of three staffs including an official with the status of a Senior Assistant Judge has been created in each of the 64 districts with total of 192 positions. All arrangements including appointment of human resources and procurement of office furniture have been allotted for District Legal Aid Office. Through these initiatives the Government legal aid service has shaped into an institution. A District legal aid officer, besides providing legal aid services to the poor and helpless litigants, also provides people with legal advices. Currently, disposal of cases, referred by the Court or Tribunal, through District Legal Aid Officer, is in the Government's consideration.

Setting up Upazila & Union Legal Aid Committee

In order to reach the Government legal aid services in the grassroots across the country, the Government has taken initiative to form Upazila and Union Legal Aid Committee by formulating National Legal Aid Services Organization (Formation of Upazila and Union Committee, Duties & Functions etc.) Regulation, 2011. Legal aid committees have been set up across the country in light of the regulation. A workshop on legal aid services has been completed in every district in presence of the Upazila and Union Chairmen.

Introducing Hotline Services

In order to provide primary information on legal aid, the NLASO started a hotline service with three cell numbers (01761222222-4) at its head office. Under the service, anyone can get necessary information about legal aid service and its procedure through a phone call from any part of the country. Primary legal advice is also given to the callers in addition to the information.

Launching Website

A website has been opened to introduce NLASO as well as provide information about the different services that the organization provides. The website is designed with volume of information so that people can learn about government legal aid from anywhere in the world. The website: www.nlaso.gov.bd contains application form for legal aid services, other forms and registers, phone numbers of legal aid offices in 64 districts and all the other procedural information.

Production of TVC & RDC

An attractive TVC & RDC has been produced for public awareness to be broadcast in public and private television and radio channels. The TVC & RDC is currently being telecast on various TV and radio channels besides BTV and Bangladesh Betar. A large number of people are calling the hotline numbers after watching the TVC or listening to the radio to get more information about legal aid.

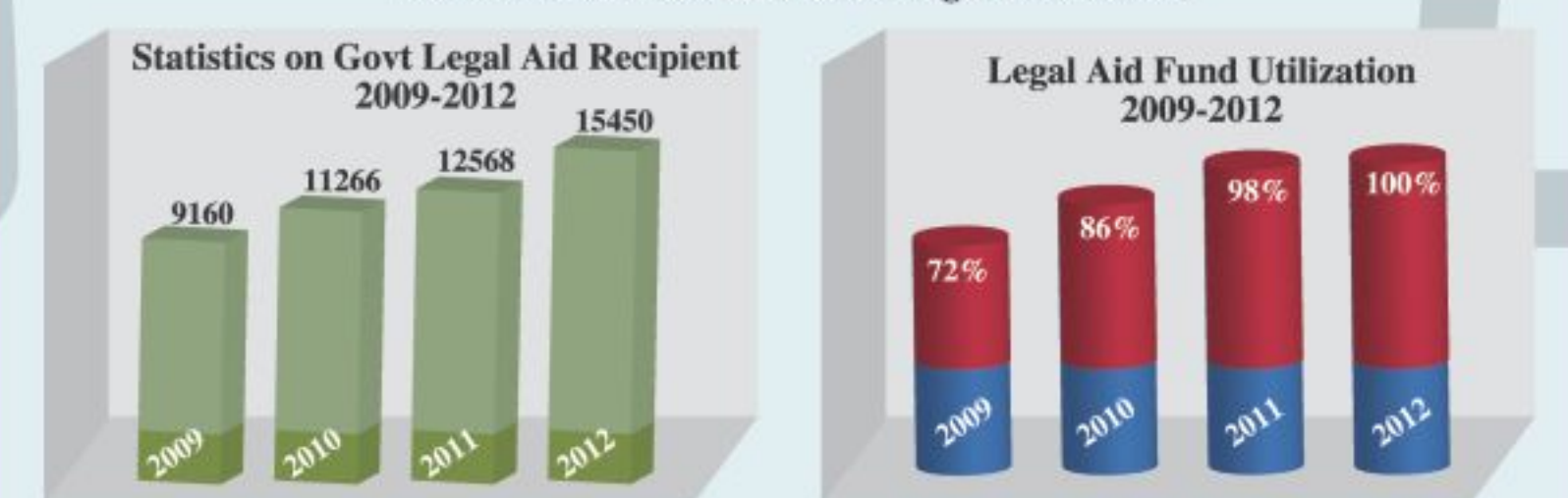
Optimum Utilization of Legal Aid Fund

In four years of the present Government's tenure, because of a rapid progress in the legal aid services, cost for the services rendered to the poor people out of the fund allotted for them has increased manifold. The utilization of the fund before 2009 was below 10%, which had increased to 72% in 2009, 86% in 2010, 98% in 2011 and 100% in 2012.

Prepare Strategic Plans of the Organization

The National Legal Aid Services Organization has prepared a five-year work-plan (2012-2017) on the basis of priorities of implementing and finalizing them.

Information and Statistics about Legal Aid Services



Challenges & Future Plans of the Government Legal Aid Services

1. Make District Legal Aid Offices as 'ADR Corner' or Alternative Dispute Resolution Center to dispose of cases referred by Court or Tribunal with the intermediation of District Legal Aid Officer.
2. Ensuring legal aid services for poor people beginning from Village Courts up to the Supreme Court at Government expenditure.
3. To pay the Advolorem court fees and other ancillary costs for the poor and underprivileged litigants under the Government legal aid services.
4. Ensure waiting rooms, rest rooms and pure drinking water for all children and women justice seekers arriving at the legal aid office from faraway places.
5. Expanding Government legal aid services at the Labour courts and tribunal to dispose of disputes relating to wage, security and right to work for underprivileged women and garment workers.
6. Bearing all costs including DNA test for litigants in situation where children are denied paternity and social respect.
7. To provide a 'package service' which comprises of legal aid services for poor and underprivileged community through joint initiatives of the GO-NGO governed by the public and private sectors.



Syed Aminul Islam
Director (District Judge)
National Legal Aid Services Organization



Prime Minister

Government of the People's
Republic of Bangladesh

15 Baishakh 1420
28 April 2013

I am happy to know the Bangladesh is celebrating "National Legal Aid Day" with due solemnity for the first time on 28 April 2013.

Establishment of rule of law and justice in the country is one of the primary electoral pledges of the present democratic government. To fulfill the commitment, multifarious reformatory and welfare activities are being implemented in the filed of law and justice including other relevant organs. In order to ensure access to justice for the poor, helpless and underprivileged, our previous Awami League Government introduced legal aid program through passing the "Legal Aid Services Act, 2000" in the National Parliament. Legal Aid Offices have already been established under the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs at national level and in all districts. The poor, helpless and destitute litigants are being benefited through these Legal Aid Offices.

I do firmly believe that a true and successful implementation of government legal aid activities shall pave the way for easy access to justice for the poor and underprivileged of the society. I do hereby urge the Bar Council, Bar Association, civil society, development partners, NGOs and media along with all government departments to come forward to increase the outreach of the government Legal Aid Service for public welfare. I hope we will be successful in establishing social justice through good governance and coordinated efforts.

I wish all out success to "National Legal Aid Day-2013".

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Sheikh Hasina

Sheikh Hasina



State Minister

Ministry of Law, Justice and
Parliamentary Affairs
Government of the People's
Republic of Bangladesh
Dhaka

15 Baishakh 1420
28 April 2013

One of the basic responsibilities of a modern democratic State is to ensure right to legal protection of all citizens. According to Article 27 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, "All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law." In spite of such provision in the Constitution, a large number of people remain deprived of legal protection because of financial crisis and social disparity. The present Government enacted the Legal Aid Services Act, 2000 during its previous tenure so that the poor and insolvent litigants can seek justice. The previous Governments during their tenure, ignored the Government legal aid service. The present Government, after assuming power, has taken significant initiatives to develop the legal aid service programmes. In addition to establishing Legal Aid Offices in all districts, we have also provided required human resources. As a result, beneficiaries of the legal aid services are continuously increasing. We express our commitment to expedite the Government legal aid services and make the Legal Aid Office as 'ADR Corner' to dispose of disputes'. The present Government has declared 28 April as 'National Legal Aid Day'. The Law and Justice Division has taken all initiatives to celebrate the Day for the first time which I believe will be encouraging for all individuals and institutions concerned including judges, lawyers. Moreover, the Day's observation will increase awareness among the poor and helpless people about Government legal aid services.

I wish success for all programmes undertaken on the occasion of 'National Legal Aid Day'.

Advocate Md. Qamrul Islam (M.P.)

Advocate Md. Qamrul Islam (M.P.)



UN Resident Coordinator
in Bangladesh

15 Baishakh 1420
28 April 2013

It gives me immense pleasure to know that the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has declared 28 April as 'National Legal Aid Day'. It is a historic event for the legal empowerment of poor and marginalized. UNDP are proud to partner with the Government of Bangladesh in this initiative. National Legal Aid Day will be celebrated across the country with a view to making Bangladeshi citizens aware of the Government's legal aid services. Access to justice is one of the cornerstones of human development. Article 27 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh guarantees 'all citizens are equal before law and entitled to equal protection of law'. Bangladesh is also party to various international instruments and conventions, which the Government is obligated to observe and implement. Unfortunately, many people are deprived of their Constitutional rights to access justice due to poverty and other social and economic barriers. With state support, people's ability to seek and demand remedies is enhanced. The poorest members of society have equal protection under the law, and this expands their choices, their freedoms, and right to a fulfilling life.

Poverty and a lack of access to information perpetuate the vulnerability of the poor. The same constraints keep them subjugated and unaware of their human rights and the avenues to pursue legal recourse when necessary. Legal aid is fundamentally a means to that end. Legal aid is a protection mechanism to ensure that the most vulnerable members of society can access the courts to have their rights upheld. This gives them greater choice and greater protection. The Government of Bangladesh facilitates protection of human rights and the legal empowerment of the poor and marginalized by bearing costs for legal representation and court fees, which enables poor litigants to seek legal recourse and protection of the law irrespective of their financial and social capacity to do so. There are two challenges for Bangladesh in this respect: (1) ensuring the legal aid system is not only accessible but also responsive to the legal needs of those who seek the service; and (2) putting in place strong legal systems or institutions also requires strong governance of those systems and institutions.

The UN System in Bangladesh is committed to continual support of the Government and wish you all well on this National Legal Aid Day.

Neal Walker

Neal Walker