

15th constitutional amendment stops capturing power illegally: PM

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Online Desk: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Tuesday said the 15th amendment to the constitution strengthened the country's democracy and empowered people to choose public representatives by stopping the path of grabbing state power illegally. "Stability is prevailing in the country due to bringing 15th amendment to the constitution and continued democratic process for a long time. So, now, no unelected person can capture state power illegally," she said. She was speaking at the oath-taking ceremony of the newly-elected Mayor of Rangpur City Corporation (RpCC) and its ward councilors, including those from reserved seats for women at her office in Dhaka.

The prime minister said the apex court had declared illegal to grab state power by issuing martial law after violating the country's constitution that has ensured the voting and democratic rights of the Bangladeshi people. "We have strengthened the country's democracy by bringing (15th) amendment to the constitution following the declaration (the apex court verdict). This democracy is meant to reinforce the power of people's strength and empower people to decide who will or won't go to power," she said. But, the people's empowerment has become a matter of heart burning for a section of so-called intellectuals as they never come to power through the people's vote, she said, adding that so, they repeatedly try to hamper the democratic process.

"They, who were never elected by people's vote and fear to face the masses, have inner burning due to this reason," she added. The prime minister reminded all that the Awami League (AL) government was the only government which handed over power peacefully after completion of its 1999-2001 tenure in Bangladesh's history. She however mentioned that the transparent ballot box and preparing voter lists with photographs had been introduced in accordance with the proposal of the Awami League led grand alliance to hold elections in a free and fair manner. She also said the then Prime Minister Khaleda Zia had prepared a voter list with 1.23 crore fake voters to hold a farcical election.

The Election Commission (EC) has been constituted through a search committee following a law enacted by her government that has made it more transparent and accountable, she said. The government has also given complete financial independence to the commission as it can present the nation a free and fair election, she added. The prime minister administered the oath to new RCC Mayor Mostafizar Rahman Mostafa, while newly elected councillors were sworn-in by LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Md Tazul Islam.

State Minister for the LGRD and Cooperatives Ministry Swapan Bhattacharjee was present on the dais while Secretary Muhammad Ibrahim moderated the function. Jatiya Party-backed candidate Mostafa won the mayoral race for the second consecutive term in the Rangpur City Corporation elections held on 27 December. Highlighting her government's measures to eliminate Monga and famine from the northern region, sheikh Hasina said Bangladesh has changed massively in the last 14 years and there was no food crisis (Monga) in the northern region.

The prime minister said her government is giving home to the homeless and landless people free of cost following the footsteps of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. "The Father of the Nation has given the country independence. None will remain homeless and landless in the Mujib's Bangla," she said. She mentioned that 40,000 more houses are being built, expressing her hope that there would be no homeless people after distributing those houses. She also briefly described her government efforts to make the entire Bangladesh well-connected in terms of communications, saying her government has built required bridges across the country that include Padma Bridge and Bangabandhu Bridge on the River Jamuna.

The prime minister said due to massive development of communications, the produced goods of the southern and northern regions are now reaching every corner of Bangladesh including the capital city at the quickest possible time. She said her government has built the Teesta Bridge over the Dharola River and the Gangachara Bridge and required roads alongside taking other measures as the Monga never comes back to the northern region. The prime minister said they have brought a revolution in building communication networks across the country which helps the countrymen be economically solvent.

She asked the newly elected RpCC mayor and councillors to devote themselves to serving the people and work for their betterment irrespective of party affiliation. In this connection, she said they have developed the Rangpur City Corporation like the other ones despite the mayor belonging to another party, adding her party works for the people's welfare without any political consideration. The prime minister said her government is now in hot pursuit to build a developed, prosperous and Smart Bangladesh by 2041 by cashing in on the opportunity of being a Digital Bangladesh.