



# Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II

# SMILE

Newsletter | Issue 3, January - June 2018

## Divisional conferences held for activating village courts

During January-April 2018, following directions of Local Government Division, Divisional Commissioner's Office, Director, Local Government and Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II Project (AVCB II) organized six divisional conferences on "Importance and responsibilities of local administration for activating village courts".

Divisional conferences held in Khulna, Barishal, Rangpur, Mymensingh, Sylhet and Rajshahi were chaired by concerned Directors, Local Government while Divisional

Commissioners were present as Chief Guests. In addition, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police, 14 Deputy Commissioners (DCs) of the respective districts under project areas attended as special guests. A total of 995 participants were present in these conferences that included members of District Training Pools (DTPs), Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNOs), Union Parishad's chairmen from respective project areas, representatives of local media, partner NGOs and AVCB II Project staff.

Progress of on-going activities of AVCB II, coordination and

collaboration of local administration, expected targets of the project, challenges and mitigation measures as well as learnings were presented from inception stage to dates of the conferences. Participants shared several recommendations including regularizing Village Courts Management Committees (VCMC) meetings by Deputy Directors Local Government (DDLGs) and implementing its important decisions; sending quarterly reports to concerned Directors, Local Government on the overall updates of village courts (VCs). ■



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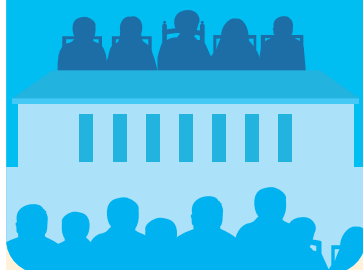
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Success story


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## At a glance successes of AVCB II: January-June 2018

Dispute  
resolutions  
through  
Village  
Courts



  
**23,417**  
cases reported

  
**1,586**  
cases transferred  
from district courts

  
**19,058**  
cases resolved  
  
**17,327**  
decisions  
implemented

Applicants  
**23,420**



6,818



16,602

Panel Members  
**26,050**



3,351



22,699

Capacity development  
of service providers

**11,902**



165



11,737

Participation in  
awareness activities

**17,08,144**



9,20,621



7,87,523

### Information corner

- Theft
- Quarreling
- Affray (fighting)
- Riot
- Cheating
- Threatening/ Intimidation
- Realization of debt
- Recovery of possession of immovable property
- Word, gesture, act intended to insult

- the modesty of a woman
- Embezzlement (misappropriation of the property entrusted to the perpetrator)
- Harassment
- Recovery of moveable property or the equivalent amount of money
- Killing or causing damage to the cattle

### Issues that VC can deal with

- Realization of compensation for adverse possession or causing damage to the moveable property
- Compensation for trespass of cattle
- Realization of compensation and due wages of agricultural labour

### Issues that VC can not deal with

- Rape
- Murder
- Kidnapping
- Robbery
- Polygamy
- Divorce
- Maintenance
- Guardianship
- Dower
- Dowry
- Restitution of conjugal life
- Violence against women and children
- Blood shedding caused by physical assault
- Determination of title of immovable property
- Any dispute of monetary value beyond BDT 75,000



## Consultation meetings with journalists for massive awareness raising

For improving massive awareness on village courts among rural poor and marginalized people, 27 consultation meetings on “Role of Media” were held with journalists in project’s working districts during April-June 2018 following leadership of district administrations with support from AVCB II Project. Approximately 1,100 representatives from national and local print and electronic media participated in these meetings.

journalists to promote village courts and its services to rural peoples particularly among poor and vulnerable women as well as marginalized people. Speakers as special guests said, disputes over property and family matters are common causes for filing cases which are increasing backlogs in resolving cases. However, these can easily be resolved through VCs which might reduce backlogs of cases (70%-80%).



DDLGs chaired these meetings while DCs of respective districts and Divisional Commissioners were present as Chief Guests. As special guests, Additional District Magistrates (ADMs), Police Supers (SPs), presidents of local press clubs, Deputy Director-Information ensured their presence. In these meetings, DCs said, ‘... in villages, people usually come to police stations or district courts for resolving even petty disputes which incurred their notable time and money.’ They also urged the

As a result, access to justice for rural people will be ensured along with retaining social peace.

As participants, journalists of these meetings provided several recommendations including ensuring regular updates on village courts from district administration. They also shared their commitments to air/publish positive news, features on VCs along with sharing messages to community people for encouraging them to receive its services. ■



## Outreach workshops with GO-NGOs

Attaining support from local government and non-government organizations (GO-NGOs) having outreach activities at community level is crucial to uphold services of VC among rural people and encouraging them to gain these services apart from regular activities of the project. In this context, for selecting suitable GO-NGOs as well as developing effective networks with them following leadership of district administration, 27 workshops were conducted during April-June 2018 at district levels. Approximately, 1,000 representatives from various GO-NGOs participated in these events while DCs were present as Chief Guests and DDLGs played role as Chair.

Speakers of these meetings shared, village court is a government service, by promoting these services local GO-NGOs would complement to achieve Goal 16 “Peace, justice and strong institutions” of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They can support to achieve a target ‘making village courts functional for creating access to justice to poor and disadvantaged people’ under the 7th five-year plan of Bangladesh. They also mentioned one of the directions made by Honorable Prime Minister in DC’s conference in 2017, for making village courts more functional for ensuring justice to mass people as well as reducing case backlogs in the courts. ■



# Photo Feature

## Chairmen, Union Parishads



“Before the project inception, people used to come to union parishads (UPs) to settle disputes through arbitration, at present, they are coming to avail services of VC by depositing prescribed fees. Popularity of VC is increasing since it ensures justice following laws within the shortest period.”

**Shahabuddin Ahmed**

*Chairman, Bahadurshadi Union Parishad  
Kaliganj Upazila, Gazipur*

“Justice seekers in my union especially women are able to speak openly during hearing sessions.

Currently, women are aware of VCs, those whoever coming to VC and getting justice, are also encouraging other women to receive these services. I ensure representation of women as panel members in VC in cases related to women and others.”

**Shirina Aktar**

*Chairman, Fakirhat Sadar UP  
Fakirhat, Bagerhat*



## Beneficiaries

“VC resolved my dispute with Joshna over due 20,000 taka. I would face many troubles if she would go to Noagaon’s district court or police station instead of VC. I would spend lots of money, time, face hassles, helpless situations and others for that. As it has been solved in VC, I am so happy.”

**Md. Shayet Ali**

*Beneficiary (Respondent  
of one case of VC)  
Ghatnagar Union, Porsa  
Upazila, Naogaon*



“My three decimals land was grabbed by respondents through porcha (record of right) of land office. After spending approximately 15/20 thousand taka (US\$ 238) during communications in land survey office, I decided to file a case. But I came to know I would be able to recover my land through VC from a court yard meeting arranged at my neighbour’s yard. I got my land back within few days after filing a case in VC. At present I don’t face any hassle, so living happily with my family.”

**Joshna Begum**

*Beneficiary, Sholukabad Union  
Bishwamvarpur Upazila,  
Sunamgonj*



## Pannel Chairmen

“Finding women like me in the judicial panel, women applicants of VC found mental strengths and was able to speak fearlessly. I was present in two cases as panel member, in addition, acted as VC chairperson (in absence of UP chairman) in three cases.”

**Mrs. Mojibunnessa**  
Member, Arpangasia Union  
Amtoli Upazila, Barguna



“It was a matter of great honor to me to be nominated as a panel member in VC. In absence of UP chairman, I dealt with two hearing sessions and participated in seven dealings of compromise. By this process problems (disputes) of poor people can be resolved easily. Experiencing their happy faces I myself also become pleased.”

**Mohammad Selim Uddin Ahamad**  
Panel Chairman-1  
Rosanggiri Union, Fatikchhari, Chattagram

## Mass people



“I heard about VC from a court yard meeting nearby my house. Sometimes, I also went to union parishad to witness VC sessions. So, if someone face any trouble (dispute) related to VC, I suggest the person to take service from VC of Kakchira UP. Due to proximity, women can easily go to VC (UP) and receive its service with minimal cost without any hassle. So, awareness is increasing day to day about this matter among all.”

**Fahima Begum** (housewife)  
Kakchira Union  
Pathorghata Upazila, Barguna



## Village Court Assistants



“I give information about petty legal issues and services to villagers regularly, so that they can address them. Women, extreme poor and illiterate men mostly visit me to get free information on legal aid services at union level. Consequently, people become more able to resolve disputes with less harassment.”

**Mrs. Nur Nahar Begum**

*Halokhana Union, Kurigram Sadar, Kurigram*

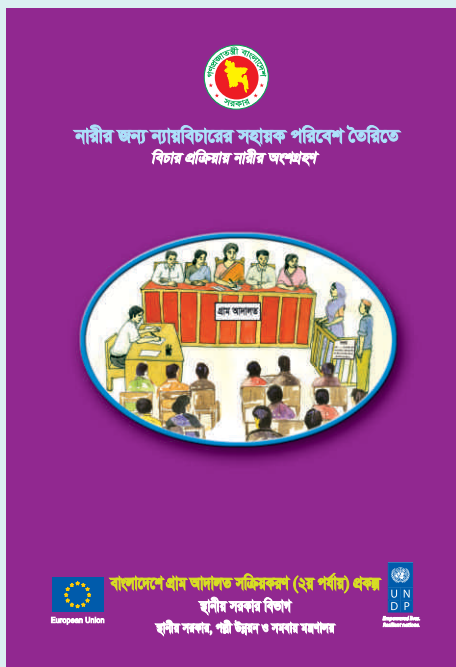


“By using flipchart during court yard meetings on VC, I describe which cases can be dealt by VC, how VC sets or executes its decision, whether people get scope to appeal against its decision etc. From these discussions, most of the participants easily get answers of their questions and express satisfaction. Not only this, they also commit to share this information to others during their needs.”

**Mrs. Goalbanu Khatun**

*Village Court Assistant  
Haridebpur Union, Rangpur Sadar  
Upazila, Rangpur.*





**Factsheet on women's participation in justice process**



**Festoon on gender responsive village courts' system**



**Pictorial booklet on gender based equal access to VC services**

## Capacity building and sensitization workshops on gender and village courts

For facilitating gender equal access to VC services through gender friendly environment, during April -June 2018, project organized nine district level sensitization workshops on “Gender and Village Courts” in Netrokona, Gopalganj, Moulvibazar, Sunamganj, Bhola, Pabna, Madaripur, Panchagarh and Satkhira. The objectives of the workshops were to enhance sensitivity and capacity of UP personnel and other relevant government and non-government stakeholders about gender responsive village courts.

A total of 544 (177 women and 367 men) participants including UP



chairmen, members, government officials, judicial officers, NGO representatives, journalists, lawyers, women's rights activists etc. participated in the workshops presided over by DDLGs of respective districts. Participants of the workshops

emphasized on need for massive awareness at the village level about VCs and its opportunities for women to settle their disputes locally apart from enhancing capacity of UP chairmen and members on operating VCs complying gender sensitiveness. ■



# Print & Online

# News in media



## The Daily Star

### Enlighten people on the benefits of village courts

The Daily Star's administration has urged local government representatives to enlighten people on the benefits of village courts, which settle disputes at a much lower cost and within a short time.

Village courts provide a fast process of settlement to ensure justice to the rural people, and maintain law and order in the rural areas. The officials said as a village court meeting regularly, it can help to reduce the burden of the district courts.

According to a statement, Deputy Commissioner of Dhaka region for media in public relation, Mr. Kamrun Nahar Siddiqua, said that the village courts are a part of the justice system. The village courts are established under the Village Courts Act, 1908. The village courts are established in the rural areas. The village courts are established in the rural areas. The village courts are established in the rural areas.

## প্রথম আলো

### গ্রাম আদালতকে আরও সক্রিয় হওয়ার নির্দেশনা

২৫ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২১, ১৩ ফাল্গুন ১৪৪২, চতুর্থাদিত্য সানি ১৪৩৯

নিজস্ব প্রতিবেদক, ঢাকা

আজ সমগ্র ও স্বল্প খরচে স্থানীয় খেতিশাস্ত্র বিশেষজ্ঞদের মাধ্যমে গ্রাম আদালতকে আরও সক্রিয় হওয়ার নির্দেশনা দেওয়া হয়েছে।

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## AVCB II news in media

### dailyobserver

Tuesday, June 8, 2018, Volume 22, Number 22, 1439 Bazar, 1439 Bazar

## Journos urged to play role in creating awareness of village courts

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### Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha(BSS)

#### NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY OF BANGLADESH

Dhaka, Wednesday, May 16, 2018

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## LATEST NEWS

### Village court's role vital to establish justice at grassroots: experts

RAJSHAHI, April 24, 2018 (BSS) - Village court can play a vital role in establishing justice if elected public representatives perform their duties properly to operate union parishad (UP) level village courts for ensuring justice at grassroots, according to experts.

"Village Court, the lowest tier of the country's judicial process, needs to be strengthened as it has a vital role to play in resolving the grassroots litigations," UNDP National Project Coordinator Sarder Asaduzzaman told a conference here yesterday.

Divisional Commissioner Office and Local Government Division in association with the Village Court Activation Project in Bangladesh (2nd Phase), European Union and UNDP organised the conference, titled 'Importance of Local Administration to Village Court Activation' at Shilpakala Academy Auditorium.

Chaired by LGD Director Shyam Kishore Roy, the conference was addressed, among others, by Commissioner of Rajshahi division Nur-Ul-Rahman, Additional Commissioner Anisul Islam, Deputy Commissioners Kamrun Nahar Siddiqua, SM Abdul Kader and Jasim Uddin, Superintendent of Police Abdul Salam, UP Chairman Khondakar Fazul Haque and UNDP Project Coordination Officer Shamim Ahsan Chowdhury.

Nur-Ul-Rahman said: "There are enormous scopes of establishing good governance. Justice contributes predominantly towards restoring peace by curtailing people's tendency to commit crime within their respective communities."

He said the village court could be an effective tool of disposal of the village level lawsuits if it can work neutrally. To this end, he

### THE BANGLADESH TODAY

UNITING PEOPLE EVERYDAY

Chaitra 27, 1424 RS; Rajah 24, 1439 Bazar

deputy commissioner Kamrun Nahar Siddiqua

the increase of public

### দৈনিক ইত্তেফাক

১৫ জুন ২০১৮

## বিভাগীয় সম্মেলন

গ্রাম আদালত সক্রিয়করণে স্থানীয় প্রশাসনের গুরুত্ব ও কৃষিকার্য বিষয়ে বিভাগীয় সম্মেলন গতকাল বুধবার নগরীর হোটেল গ্রান্ডপার্কের সভাকক্ষে অনুষ্ঠিত হয়। দিনব্যাপী এ সম্মেলনে পটুয়াখালী, বোলা ও বরগুনা জেলায় বাংলাদেশ সরকার ও জাতিসংঘ উন্নয়ন কর্মসূচী (ইউএনডিপি)র সহায়তায় সংগঠিত জেলা প্রশাসক, স্থানীয় সরকারের উপ-পরিচালক, জেলা প্রশিক্ষণ পুন্ডের সদস্য, উপজেলা নির্বাহী অফিসার, ইউপি চেয়ারম্যান ও বিভিন্ন এনজিও'র কর্মকর্তারা উপস্থিত ছিলেন। সম্মেলনে প্রধান অতিথির বক্তৃতা করেন বিভাগীয় কমিশনার মোঃ হাফিজুল্লাহ। বিশেষ অতিথি ছিলেন অতিরিক্ত ডিআইজি আজাদ মিয়া, জেলা প্রশাসক সেলিম উদ্দিন, বরিশাল জেলা প্রশাসক মোঃ হাবিবুল্লাহ রহমান, পটুয়াখালী জেলা প্রশাসক ড. মোঃ মাহমুদুর রহমান, বরগুনা জেলা প্রশাসক মোঃ মোহাম্মেদুর রহমান। বক্তৃতা করেন ইউএনডিপি'র জাতীয় প্রকল্প সমন্বয়ক সরদার এম আব্দুল্লাহমান। সভাপতিত্ব করেন অতিরিক্ত বিভাগীয় কমিশনার (প্রাজ) মোঃ গোলাম মোস্তফা।

### মমকাল

৯ বছরে ৯১ হাজার ৬০০ মামলা নিষ্পত্তি

১৯ বছরে ৯১ হাজার

সংগঠিত হয়েছে একটি মামলা নিষ্পত্তি হতে পেরে যা, গ্রাম আদালতের বিচার ক্ষমতা বৃদ্ধি পেয়েছে।

১৯ বছরে ৯১ হাজার ৬০০ মামলা নিষ্পত্তি

১৯ বছরে ৯১ হাজার



During January-June 2018, various activities of AVCB II project were highlighted in approximately 580 media coverages. This included 465 local and 115 nationals counting 45 TV coverages. These reports mainly covered trainings on village courts, consultation meetings with journalists for massive awareness raising, GO-NGOs outreach workshops, divisional conferences, consultation meetings with district level judicial and police personnel, workshops on gender etc. In addition, two talk shows on TV and one national daily covered successes of VC and AVCB II elaborately.



## Television



গোটা বিরোধ বিচারিক সেবা বিভাগে প্রকল্প ছাড়া ইউএনডিপি প্রকল্পের জাতীয় প্রকল্প সমন্বয় আদালতকে আরও সহজে। গতকাল পরিষদে স্থানীয় বিজ্ঞানী সম্মেলনে প্রশাসক মো. সাব্বির জেলা প্রশাসক মো. তোহিদুল ইসলাম বলেন বাংলাদেশ সরকারের কাছে সেবা পৌঁছে দেওয়ার জন্য কাজ করছে। এ ছাড়া প্রকল্পটির প্রথম পর্যায়ে দেশের ছোট ছোট জেলায় ১২০টি ইউনিয়নে প্রায় ২৭ কোটির ১২৮ গ্রামীন জনগণের কাছে সেবা পৌঁছে দেওয়ার জন্য কাজ করছে। এ ছাড়া প্রকল্পটির প্রথম পর্যায়ে দেশের ছোট ছোট জেলায় ১২০টি ইউনিয়নে প্রায় ২৭ কোটির ১২৮ গ্রামীন জনগণের কাছে সেবা পৌঁছে দেওয়ার জন্য কাজ করছে। এ ছাড়া প্রকল্পটির প্রথম পর্যায়ে দেশের ছোট ছোট জেলায় ১২০টি ইউনিয়নে প্রায় ২৭ কোটির ১২৮ গ্রামীন জনগণের কাছে সেবা পৌঁছে দেওয়ার জন্য কাজ করছে।



# Capacity building for relevant stakeholders of VC

Ensuring required capacity development initiatives for relevant stakeholders of VC is an ongoing intervention of AVCB II. As continuation of this process, with leadership of local administration members of District Training Pools (DTPs) meanwhile completed essential capacity development activities at districts and upazila levels.



## Capacity building for UP representatives & relevant stakeholders of VC

Following guidance of DDLGs, DTP members provided five days training at district levels to 23 UP Secretaries and 22 Village Court Assistants to strengthen their capacity on VC. Subsequently, a total of 4,437 UP members received 3 days training and 8,776 village police got orientation on VC by DTP members at upazila level under the guidance of Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNOs).



## ToT for the newly recruited PNGO staff

Each DTP is comprised with five government officials, district and upazila coordinators of Partner NGOs along with District Facilitator (DF) of the Project, UNDP in a district. During February to May 2017, 15 Trainings of Trainers (TOTs) were provided to DTP members with support of NILG. Later (June 2018), for increasing capacity as DTP members 29 newly recruited staff of partner NGOs participated in a five days TOT in Mymensingh. This training was conducted by Joint Director (Training & Advocacy), NILG with Capacity Development unit of AVCB II.

## Reflection workshops with DTP members at divisional level

For capturing reflections/experiences of DTP members in organizing and conducting district and upazila level capacity development trainings for UP representatives and other VC stakeholders, with collaboration of National Institute of Local Government (NILG) the project organized eight reflection workshops in eight divisions of the country i.e. Dhaka, Mymensingh, Barishal, Khulna, Chattagram, Rangpur, Rajshahi and Sylhet with respective DTP members. Senior

faculty members of NILG i.e. Director General, Director (Admin & Coordination), Director (Research) and Joint-Director (Training & Advocacy) along with concerned personnel of the project conducted the workshops. A total of 325 (female 50 and male 275) DTP members (GoB, UNDP and PNGO) participated in the workshops covering 27 working districts of AVCB II.





## Consultations with judiciary and police at district levels

During January-June 2018, Project has organized 21 district level consultation meetings with Judiciary and Police with presence of 820 participants. The major objectives of the meetings were to give an overview of village courts, share challenges and learnings from AVCB Project's pilot phase and to increase coordination and collaboration on early case screening and speedy transfer of suitable cases to village courts.

Participants of these meetings organized in Sirajganj, Rangpur, Satkhira, Khulna, Bagerhat, Gazipur, Gaibandha, Panchagarh, Kurigram, Bhola, Netrokona, Mymensing, Chattragram, Cox's Bazar, Pabna, Sunamganj, Moulvibazar, Chandpur, Faridpur, Patuakhali and Barguna districts shared their experiences and recommendations on VC. They also remarked, as a result of these consultation meetings, transfer of suitable cases from district courts to village courts will be increased.





## Dolena Begum got back BDT 75,000 by village court

Dolena Begum (40) is a poor housewife of Chandradighulia union of Gopalganj district. Maintaining a six members' family with mere income of her rickshaw puller husband is hard, so she herself also rears poultry to raise income. In June 2017, Md. Kamrul Mina, one of her relatives who stays in same village took BDT 75,000 (US\$ 893) loan from her with a commitment of paddy as interim interest for six months to run his business, the amount she saved within hardship. Eventually, due date had been passed, she did not get any paddy she supposed to have as interest of this loan, rather, Kamrul was missing dates repeatedly to pay back her amount.

In January of this year, Kamrul refused to pay back her loan. For getting this money back, Dolena appealed to village leaders for justice, but Kamrul did not heed to their decisions. At this point, Dolena Begum was feeling more dishearten.

In this helpless condition, Dolena Begum learned about village courts' services from a court yard meeting held at neighbour's house and filed an application against Kamrul on 20 January 2018 at Chandradighulia Union Parishad. On 20 February 2018, a village court was formed comprising UP chairman of the union along with four selected representatives as panel members by both the parties. On the first day's (17 February 2018) hearing session, village court declared its decision publicly following consent of all the panel members (5:0) that respondent Kamrul will pay back BDT



75,000 to Dolena Begum within next seven days. On the first hearing day, when VC declared its decision, Dolena Begum got her entire money back from Kamrul.

Village Courts support to ensure legal rights in access to justice to the poor, disadvantaged and marginalized rural people specially women like Dolena Begum. Following Bangladeshi law, each union of the country has a Village Court for mainly dealing with petty civil and criminal cases within BDT 75,000 (approximately within US\$ 893). For

making these VCs more effective and functional Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II Project (AVCB II) works in 27 districts including Gopalganj with financial and technical support of European Union (EU), Government of Bangladesh and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Under this project, during last one year (July 2017- June 2018), in total 982 cases (297 female and 685 male) were filed in 32 unions including Chandradighulia of Gopalganj covering three upazilas. Among the cases 823 (84%) were resolved while decisions were implemented for 602 (73%) cases.

After getting her money back, Dolena Begum plans to establish a poultry farm nearby her house along with managing educational expenses of her children. Dolena is satisfied with the justice delivered by VC and remarked, "I became helpless when Kamrul refused to pay back my money and behaving badly. Because I am not able to run a case in district court or taking support from police station. VC has recovered my money". She also shared, being a relative respondent Kamrul is regularly communicating with her family like earlier. Relationship with him also reconciled after getting back the due amount. ■

For more information please contact

✉ [info.avcb@undp.org](mailto:info.avcb@undp.org)

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**Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II**  
Local Government Division, IDB Bhaban (Level 12)  
Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207  
Phone: +88 02 9183466-8