

## **Zonta International District 25 Biennial Conference underway in Dhaka**

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**Dhaka: The three-day 18<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference of Zonta International District 25, a global voluntary organization of professional women, has begun. The conference was inaugurated on October 31 at The Westin Dhaka hotel, with former Adviser to the Caretaker Government Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman present as the chief guest.**

More than 150 representatives from various Zonta Clubs across Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and India under District 25 are participating in the event. The conference is being recognized as a significant gathering of South Asian women leaders and professionals to discuss issues of women's leadership, gender equality, and women's advancement.

The ceremony began with the national anthems of Bangladesh, India,

Nepal, Sri Lanka, and New Zealand. Led by Conference Secretary Nasima Akhter, the flags of the participating countries were displayed. Later, renowned singer Meherin Mahmud performed a song titled “This Is Zonta,” highlighting women’s empowerment and the prevention of violence against women.

In his speech, chief guest Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman said, “We believe in the advancement of women not only in Bangladesh but across the world. Women’s empowerment is now a call to action. We need women who can awaken their inner strength and lead from within.”

Guest of honor Lulzim Pllana, Ambassador of Kosovo to Bangladesh, remarked, “Women in Kosovo are making remarkable achievements in politics, sports, music, cinema, and the arts. Many of them are now global examples of inspiration. Zonta International also believes in equality, leadership, and collective effort. I hope Zonta in Bangladesh will play a major role in building women leaders.”

At the event, internationally acclaimed Bangladeshi fashion designer Bibi Russell was honored with a special award. In her acceptance speech, she said, “I dedicate this honor to the weavers of Bangladesh. Our traditional handloom industry is going through a difficult time. Once, these artisans were the pride of our rural economy and culture, but now they are struggling to survive.”

The welcome address was delivered by Conference Chair Ztn Sonia Panni. Other speakers included Phillippa Jacobs-Lory, Director of the Zonta International Board; Ztn Dilruba Ahmed, District 25’s Bylaws and Resolutions Chair and Parliamentarian; and Ztn Ratan Abul Hossain, Lieutenant Governor of District 25, among others.

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