

Human Rights No Longer a Private Matter

Ted Morello writes from the United Nations, New York

The days may be ending when human rights abuses were considered an internal matter, beyond the reach of international bodies.

INTERNATIONAL indignation is chipping away at the sacrosanct concept of absolute national sovereignty...

Debate at the United Nations General Assembly, Security Council and legal affairs committee have been marked by calls for the UN to play a more active international role in domestic human rights issues.

Opponents of any such shift cite the UN Charter as evidence that the international body has no role in domestic human rights affairs.

Because the protection of human rights has now become one of the keystones in the arch of peace, Perez de Cuellar suggested a more aggressive enforcement role for the UN.

Secretary-General emphasised the point: "We are clearly witnessing what is probably an irresistible shift in public attitude toward the belief that defence of the oppressed in the name of morality should prevail over frontiers and legal documents."

Chapter 7 of the UN Charter says the principle of non-intervention may be overridden by "any threat to peace, breach of peace or act of aggression."



Mock proposed that the White Helmets be used as follows: Upon learning of gross and massive human rights violations, the Bureau of the Commission on Human Rights would send a team of White Helmets as quickly as possible to investigate within the country where the alleged violations had taken place.

Netherlands Foreign Minister Hans van der Broek made similar comments before the Security Council: "The days when countries could credibly claim that their human rights record was a strictly internal affair are definitely over."

He also recalled how the Economic Community of West African States mustered a peacekeeping force during the civil war in Liberia.

The report and comments of the government concerned would be placed on the agenda of the next session of the human rights commission, which would decide on follow-up action.

Mock said: "The question of human rights and fundamental freedoms has become essentially international. To express concern in the area of human rights constitutes an important and legitimate element of international dialogue."

The world cannot sit idly by when one of the member states of the United Nations terrorizes its own people. The Dutch foreign minister said the UN had already set a precedent by providing safe haven and a corps of UN civil guards to protect Iraqi Kurds fleeing the forces of Saddam Hussein.

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Czechoslovakian deputy prime minister Jiri Dienstbier joined the debate: "It is not possible to argue principles of sovereignty and non-interference when the matter at issue is that of preventing ruthless, intentional and mass violations of human rights and freedoms."

Dienstbier went so far as to say UN forces could be used in a preemptive way against "obvious preparations for aggressive acts."

But there is also a powerful counterforce against any attempt to bring UN pressure to bear on rights issues. Indian Foreign Minister Madhav Singh Solanki warned the Assembly that "any outside intervention in a UN member country on humanitarian grounds constitutes an abridgement of national sovereignty and is, therefore, fraught with serious implications."

China's foreign minister Qian Qichen accused some countries of perpetuating the Cold War by using allegations of human rights violations as an excuse for "interfering in the affairs which are basically within the jurisdiction of the states."

scope of mechanisms for reviewing compliance" with human rights agreements.

Foreign Minister Jorge Carlos Fonseca of Cape Verde said: "What is more alarming is that the United Nations witnesses all these crimes but is incapable of taking measures to save lives and protect the defenseless."

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Apathy towards the Golden Egg

Synthetic materials have long been threatening our economic mainstay — jute — with as much as extinction. This fear has been standard in school and college texts and every literate man is aware of it.

Which is why we were jolted into realisation of the synthetic threat by the text-book apprehensions just jumping out of the pages in the shape of hard-fact news: 50 looms of the Raipur Gauri Jute Mills in Serajganj have been closed down leading to retrenchment of about 5,000 workers — and stocks of jute product are piling up beyond the crore-Taka value with little prospect of their finding a good market.

If at all jute has to be cultivated and processed and manufactured as a worthwhile economic activity — the first thing that the government must ensure is a healthy and big enough domestic market for jute products which would automatically use up the bulk of raw jute domestically.

Government is the biggest buyer of textiles and other materials derivable from jute. If government is keen enough, it can set a trend of loving jute. Synthetic would cease to be a threat to jute if only the government is serious enough about the matter.

Putting the Endless Quarry to Better Use

It's decidedly a man's world. Women are discriminated against in a thousand forms for the simple reason of being born as such. They were as if banned from excelling at anything and even from having a soul.

The situation of women in the Bengali society — unlike, say among the Garos — has not been any different although there are remnants here and there of women power holding sway not aeons of years ago.

As a result old skills in very traditional crafts have been revived and newer skills taught and instilled in a very broad stratum of our women. But this skilled manpower — crossing the first hurdle to becoming self-supporting, independent individuals contributing effectively to the good of their families in particular and of the society in general — are facing more formidable ones created by the realities of a man's world.

The Micro-Industries Development Assistance Society — MIDAS — has recently held a very timely forum to bring the above developments and problems to focus. They have drawn up a very useful set of recommendations one of which stresses the need for giving technical education to women entrepreneurs particularly in the area of marketing.

Well-functioning Telecommunications Essential Prerequisite for Development

19-November to 23 November. It is expected that this conference will contribute to a coordinated harmonious development of telecommunication services and equipment issued by the Commission of the European Community in 1987 to respond better to the ever increasing demand for more and more sophisticated telecommunication services.

The Central and Eastern European countries in transition suffer, generally speaking from very poor telecommunication services. For example, whereas the average telephonic density in the OECD countries is around 40 main lines/inhabitant, the Central and Eastern European countries have an average telephone density of only some 10 main lines/inhabitant.

To attract such huge amounts the countries concerned must create a more favourable investment climate, which will require changes in current telecommunication policies and restructuring of the sector and the development of new financial strategies.

The European Telecommunication Development Conference (EU-RDC) will take place in Prague from today.

The European Regional Telecommunication Development Conference (EU-RDC), begins in Prague today, Nov 19, to continue up to Nov 23.

Participation: The Conferences are open to all parties concerned, including the private sector, in order to ensure transparency and complementarity. Thus, the Development Conferences are to be attended by high-level representatives of governments, of the private sector as well as of bilateral and multilateral financing and development agencies.

Background: The Plenipotentiary Conference of the ITU (Nice, 1989), decided to create the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) on equal footing with the other permanent organs of the Union (CCITT, CCIR and IFRS).

These conferences will have a dual role to play — 1) To serve as fora for discussions and considerations of topics, programmes and projects relevant to telecommunication development and, hence, contribute to a coordinated harmonized development of telecommunications: Thus,

Who is a Terrorist?

Information Centre at Dhanmondi that the police force of Bangladesh can do nothing to curb campus violence and requested his audience, mostly housewives and young boys, to inform the police in secret about any illegal arms. This is ridiculous. Then why have a police force at all?

On that fearsome Sunday while the battle was raging I saw a whole platoon of blue-uniformed "silent spectators" standing in front of the VC's house while Mirza Ghalib was bleeding to death, not to speak of that unfortunate tea selling boy who was also gunned down. I am damned sick of our brand of "plungings" and "old fossils" of the DU who allow these terrible situations in which the young Bangladesh nation is held at ransom by a few.

On the historic Biplob Dibosh, Nov 7, when the whole nation remains confused as to who were the revolutionaries — as an inquisitive peace activist I ventured into the famous Madhu's Canteen and heard perhaps the most sensitive approach to the campus situation in context of Bangladesh and its movements towards achieving democracy.

Analysis of the situation Mr A K M Badruddin Milon, convenor, DU branch of Chhatra Oikya Forum stated: "In the nation's critical moments it is the students who always play a leading role like that in the Language Movement of 1952, Mass Uprising of 1969, Liberation Struggle of 1971 and the Mass Uprising of October 1990. From these it has been proved that the students are the vanguards of the people's struggle to achieve a truly democratic society. It is the students who always shed their blood for the rights of the people. That is why foreign powers work out blue-prints to alienate students from the people and in cases become

Civic problems

Sir, Some areas under Sutrapur Police Station deserve very urgent attention of the concerned authorities. Hathkolla road is in pretty bad shape for a considerable period of time. The link road between Rajani Chowdhury Road and Shashi-Bhushan Chatterjee Lane connecting Jame-Mosque at holding No. 29 R.C. Road is half-bit, one tube light remains constantly missing. Moreover the transformer providing electric connection to the homes at the above holding number is heavily overloaded due to large construction project undertaken by the Masjid Committee recently. The committee has already completed sixteen commercial flats besides five old flats adjacent to the Jame-Mosque. This does not include the students dormitory and the installations and facilities of the mosque itself. The committee has a plan to build sixteen more commercial flats bringing the total number of commercial flats to 37.

BTV and World Cup Cricket

Sir, BTV earned the appreciation of football fans of Bangladesh, by telecasting live

While there is no denying the benefit that will accrue to the philanthropic project sheltering poor and orphan students whose number is estimated at over a hundred, one may like to assess the pressure the above undertaking would bring on the civic facilities which are already over taxed.

The sewerage, conservancy, municipal and power supply situation being what it is for the past decade or so with no modernization and expansion in sight, we foresee a bleak prospect for this part of the old city, if improvement is not undertaken immediately.

Attention of PDB, DESA, WASA, DCC, R&H is drawn to the above situation for implementation of effective solutions.

Pro Bono Publico.

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And I am reminded of "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." Sarcastically: If no study and examination of real worth, then why don't the "old fossils" close down the DU and cultivate rice? Our people need rice and fish, not guns and bullets.

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