

## Commentary

# Dhaka should ratify all the human rights conventions

By S M Ali

With the international community paying increased attention to the application of Human Rights (HR) around the world, there is an urgent need for Bangladesh to ratify three covenants underlining obligations of states to individual freedoms, some in such sensitive areas as the equality before law and freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

According to a comprehensive briefing paper prepared by a London-based HR group last month, Dhaka is yet to sign these instruments: The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and the Covenant against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

The document, just made available to The Daily Star, shows that Bangladesh has ratified three other conventions relating to elimination of all forms of

discriminations against races, women and children.

Speaking on ground of anonymity, a well-placed source here has suggested that the delay in the ratification of three instruments, mentioned earlier, was more due to an oversight than on account of any principle. Again, many of the provisions incorporated in the conventions concerned are included in the constitution of Bangladesh.

However, as we see it, the ratification of all the HR instruments should be seen as a matter of commitment, not just as a formality. Many of these covenants, some going back to the adoption of the UN charter in 1945, came into effect at various stages, through long detailed deliberations involving the international community. Many of these instruments also provide for monitoring mechanisms to ensure the observance of rights ratified by various states.

Without citing any specific

examples, a recent report by a committee of the US Senate questioned the Human Rights record of Bangladesh. It is quite conceivable for the Senate or any other body to raise the question of Dhaka's total commitment to HR instruments.

In the backdrop of the opposition of Bangladesh to the aggression against Bosnia by Serbian forces and its participation at the Global Conference on Human Rights, just concluded in Vienna, it is all the more important that the country speaks with a strong voice on the issues under discussion.

In this context, the document available to this newspaper suggests that a number of other South Asian countries, including India and Pakistan, are also yet to ratify all the existing HR conventions, including the most crucial one, the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.



Abul Bashar, a labour leader, addressing a meeting of jute, textiles, yarn and sugar sector workers in the city yesterday. —Star photo.

## Labour bodies

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meet on June 28 to finalise the joint programme.

Sources in both the labour bodies, however, hinted that the planned shutdown dates may be altered.

The combine leaders yesterday decided to hold a fresh convention of delegates on June 29 to approve the new schedule. The delegates, in their June 18 convention, approved the July 11-14 shutdown which was to have been announced at yesterday's rally.

Chaired by Abul Bashar, the rally was addressed by Iqbal Majumder, Shahidullah Choudhury, S M Rumi, Anwar Begum, Mostuddowla, Ali Akbar Biswas, Nurul Islam Khan, Mohammad Ismail and others. Shah Alam read out the declaration.

## Majid

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firm without any tender and another sum of Tk 600 crore out of a Tk 900 crore allocation for the irrigation sector was 'plundered'.

He also alleged that an Executive Engineer of WDB in Bhola was mercilessly beaten up for going by the rules regarding tenders.

"I am ready to resign if the charges are proved," Huq said, adding that if it is not proved the opposition member should seek unqualified apology for making false charges before Parliament.

Immediately after completing his speech, the minister left the House and Tofael Ahmed, rising also on a point of personal explanation, accepted the challenge and requested the Speaker to form a parliamentary committee to investigate into the matter.

Mohammad Nasim, in support of Tofael, urged the Speaker to form the committee immediately and proposed to send names from the opposition.

He also demanded forming a similar committee to probe into alleged corruption in the Satpam and Scimitar deals and said the Dr Iqbal Mahmud report should be placed before Parliament. Energy Minister Khandker Mosharrat Hossain was not present in the House during Nasim's speech.

The Speaker sought Deputy Leader of the House Badruddoza Chowdhury's opinion on the opposition demand for a parliamentary committee but Chief Whip Delwar Hossain said that the committee may be formed later since the House was preoccupied with budget discussions.

The Speaker ended the matter by saying he would give his decision today.

## Nepal

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condition of anonymity that the police opened fire and used teargas shells to disperse a group of youngsters who set fire to the Kathmandu Municipality building.

Angry mobs also disrupted traffic on the city's main roads with barricades, and stones and bricks littered the roads around public buildings including the General Post Office, the National Stadium, a public park and Bagh Bazar localities, the witnesses said.

State radio said the curfew would be in effect from 7.00 pm to 4 am (1330 to 2230 GMT) in Kathmandu municipality areas to maintain law and order.

If anybody breaks the curfew order within the nine hour period, they can be shot by police security guards, the announcement said.

The Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) Party, Nepal's main opposition, called the strike to protest at the death of General Secretary Madan Bhandari in a road accident on May 16. It wants the government to set up an inquiry, saying Bhandari may have been murdered.

Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala rejected the demand on Saturday, saying, I am not someone who yields to pressure of this kind.

For the second day running, authorities announced an overnight curfew in the capital. Scores of people were injured in clashes between police and communists.

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# Budget debate

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criticism could not contribute to the development of the country, Badruddoza told the House, and appealed to the opposition to come forward to work unitedly for national progress.

The Deputy Leader of the House, however, suggested that the bureaucracy should be made accountable to the people and Parliament should enact necessary laws to this end. The bureaucrats must be public servants in the literal sense of the term.

Refuting the opposition allegation that the government was not allowing its political opponents to speak, Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury said it was certainly a travesty of the truth.

The opposition is not only speaking "it has been using harsh language everyday against the government," Chowdhury asserted.

He, however, reminded the opposition of the quotable quote: "Liberty is the right to do what the law permits."

"You cannot violate the law that you yourself have made here in Parliament," the Deputy Leader told the opposition members.

The Opposition members on the other hand continued to severely criticise the proposed budget for the ninth day yesterday while the ministers kept lauding it.

Abdus Samad Azad, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, called for a national consensus on 'transparency' in national economic affairs.

Samad Azad was critical of the procedure of the budget discussions in the House, saying it left no effective scope for meaningful consultations between the opposition and the government on a crucial issue like the budget.

Jatiya Party leader Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury termed the national budget ambitious and called for removing all bottlenecks for industrial investment.

Taking part in general debate

## New five taka note from tomorrow

Bangladesh Bank will issue a denomination of 5 taka note bearing the signature of Governor Khurshed Alam from tomorrow. The note will be circulated in the money market from Mothijheel branch of Bangladesh Bank initially. Later it will be also issued from other offices of the bank. The existing five taka note will remain in circulation along with the new note, reports UNB.

## Kamal's meeting

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hands of some mastans and black money holders.

The Democratic Forum held a meeting later at 7 pm at the same venue under heavy police protection. Presided over by Shamsul Huda, it was addressed, among others, by Dr Kamal Hossain, Barrister Amirul Islam, AU Ahmed, Advocate Ramesh Maitra, Abul Kashem and Rabeya Siraj.

Local Forum leaders filed a case against seven leaders and workers of the Awami League, Jubo League and Chhatra League with the Kotwali thana under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

The seven leaders and workers are Bipul Ghosh, GS of district Awami League, and Farooque Hossain, Nazrul Hasan, Mamunur Rashid, Habibur Rahman, Ziaul Hasan and Maniul Hasan.

## Drug Abuse

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department Syed Muniruddin. Matin said three five-bed hospitals for treatment and rehabilitation of drug-addicts would open soon in Rajshahi, Khulna and Chittagong.

Commitment, a national voluntary organisation, also organised a meeting at its central office with Abul Kalam Azad in the chair. Arifuzzaman Shamim, Amena Newazi and Nasima Aktar Mona addressed the meeting.

Procheta, an anti-drug organisation, brought out a colourful procession from its central office at Malibagh which ended at Osmani Memorial Hall.

# The Midnight File

## Five Kashmiri Muslims burned alive in Srinagar

SRINAGAR, (India) June 26: Five Kashmiri Muslims were burned alive when Indian paramilitary forces set fire to their home in the Himalayan region, police and witnesses said today. They said men of the paramilitary Border Security Force (BSF) torched the house in the southern Anantnag city in India's Jammu and Kashmir state on Friday following an attack on a security patrol, reports Reuter.

## Fierce fighting in Bosnia

SARAJEVO, June 26: The besieged central Bosnian town of Zepece was in flames as Muslims and Croats clashed today and members of Bosnia's multi-ethnic collective presidency met European Community ministers in Brussels. "Zepece was in flames," said United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) spokesman Pepe Gallegos in Sarajevo, quoting UN military observers in the area, reports Reuter.

# Aideed's men threaten to kill Americans

MOGADISHU, June 26: Supporters of fugitive Somali warlord, Mohamed Farah Aideed threatened today to kill hundreds of US soldiers and civilians, hours after an American ship was attacked in Mogadishu port, reports AFP.

General Aideed's supporters said in a leaflet circulated here that unless United Nations peacekeepers in Somalia called off their hunt for Aideed they would kill "1,500 soldiers or civilians from American inside or outside the country in a way of martyrdom ever experienced in the world."

## CU students observe strike

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 26: Classes at the Chittagong University (CU) today were not held as the All Party Student Unity (APSU) enforced strike in protest against enhancement of fees for examinations and certificates, campus sources and police said.

Another student front 'Shikka Sangram Parishad' also called for strike today at CU for the same reason.

## Fresh areas in 2 thanas of Sylhet inundated

From Our Correspondent

SYLHET, June 26: The flood situation in Juteganj and Beambazar thanas has deteriorated due to onrush of flood waters from the hilly areas across the border.

Fresh areas have been inundated and flood waters in Balaganj, Fenchuganj, Biswanath and Sadar thanas remained stagnant.

Their leaflet was addressed to 'the warlord Howe' — a reference to Jonathan Howe, the UN special representative in Somalia.

Earlier today, the captain of an unarmed US fuel tanker here to supply American forces serving under the United Nations described how his ship came close to going up in flames when three shells slammed into it as it was unloading in Mogadishu Port on Friday.

Captain John Withers of the American Osprey, part of the US navy's sea-lift command, said one of the shells smashed through the ship's inch-thick steel into a tank holding some of the cargo of more than 100,000 barrels of diesel fuel.

## BGMEA chief

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repaying loans should be increased to 270 days from the present grace period of 80 days. Even this directive, he mentioned, was not being executed properly by the commercial banks.

He urged the government to reintroduce the Export Performance Bonus through which exporters received cash benefit for their outstanding performances in earning foreign exchange.

Mosharrat Hossain expressed his dissatisfaction at the Finance Minister's remarks about the selling of quotas for garments exports, saying this remark was not based on facts. He said it was a generalised allegation, and all cases of quota selling do not mean 'rent seeking'. The garments exporters' leader was also critical of the withdrawal of subsidy on fertiliser, saying it would directly affect the farmers and overall agricultural production.

# Vienna declaration hailed as historic document

VIENNA, June 26: More than 160 nations hailed a new declaration on human rights as a historic document that will give hope to people across the globe but activists said it would do little to end the suffering of millions of abuse victims, reports Reuter.

Delegates of the UN world conference on human rights adopted the document by acclamation on Friday after two weeks of debate over shadowed by the war in Bosnia less than 400 km from Austria's borders.

"We leave Vienna with the accomplishment of hope... and understanding that the commitment has been laid for future progress," conference Secretary-General Ibrahim Fall of Senegal told delegates before the forum was brought to a close.

Despite hours of haggling over the 32-page document, negotiators failed to agree on the most controversial issue of establishing a UN rights supreme with the power to report an individual state for violations to the UN Security Council.

To save further delay in issuing the final declaration, the conference decided to pass on the controversial issue to the next session of the UN General Assembly.

The idea of a UN High Commissioner for Human Rights was staunchly backed by the United States, the European Community and

Japan but developing nations argued the time was not right.

Despite reservations, US chief delegate John Shattuck said the conference had "produced a strong, forward-looking document that reaffirms the universality of human rights and the basic principles my country has stood for."

Proposals to set up a human rights court fell by the wayside and the conference suggested studying plans for a tribunal to try crimes against humanity — a more serious but rarer offence.

Hardline China had warned the West to back off and said human rights were the responsibility of the state. China was backed by DPRK and Vietnam.

Killing and continued 'ethnic cleansing' in Bosnia hung over the conference like a cloud. In a moving speech, Bosnia's Foreign Minister Haris Silajdzic pricked the conscience of many delegates by describing horrors taking place in his country while nations were extolling progress in human rights.

Delegates agreed to send a resolution to the UN Security Council and Silajdzic's pleas for action were taken up by Islamic nations who threw the conference into disarray on Thursday by forcing a vote on a special declaration on Bosnia.

Most Western nations abstained, unhappy over the call to lift an arms embargo against the Muslim-led government. Some delegates said privately

they doubted whether any of it would make any difference.

The Vienna declaration and programme of action, was agreed by consensus but human rights activists said it was a waste of time and branded the conference a summit of lost opportunities.

"There has been no reparation for the victims as governments fine-tuned their official declarations and reaffirmed the 50-year-old core values of universality, indivisibility and interdependence," Amnesty International said.

Amnesty Secretary General Pierre Sané said that during the conference the human rights body sent urgent appeals to save lives, stop torture and the death penalty to 80 countries, including the United States, China, India and Turkey.

Representatives from more than 1,000 non-governmental organisations who held a parallel conference described the declaration as vague, long on words and short on action.

Original plans to set up checks and monitoring missions to states suspected of abuse were deleted from the final text. Instead, UN bodies were asked to cooperate with states.

But activists welcomed the passages promoting the rights of women, children, the disabled and minorities, saying it could lead to some improvements if governments took them seriously.

## Three judges suspended

Three judges have been suspended on charge of corruption, misconduct and inefficiency, an official announcement said yesterday, reports UNB.

The Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs took the action in consultation with the Supreme Court as per Rule 11 (1) of Government Employees Regulations 3(A) and (D) of 1985.

The suspended judges are Additional District and Sessions Judge of Chandpur Hasan Imam, Sub-Judge and Assistant Sessions Judge of Patuakhali Azizur Rahman and Assistant Judge of Shibhalaya thana in Manikganj Begum Umm Nur Habiba Khatun.

Departmental cases have also been started against them.

## Fatikchhari HSC exams held under police cordon

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 26: A large contingent of police was deployed today for the holding of the scheduled HSC examination at Fatikchhari College Centre where a serious violence took place Thursday that left about 60 persons hurt.

Police said the scheduled examination today was held peacefully while the centre was fully cordoned off during the examination hours.

The riot police was on alert around the violence-hit Fatikchhari Centre to prevent any attempt of violence.

## 464 more Rohingyas return home

COX'S BAZAR, June 26: Some 464 Rohingya refugees returned to their homeland in Myanmar as the repatriation resumed today (Saturday) after 10 days of suspension due to incessant rain, reports UNB.

# Dairy owners' campaign

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is served by the tinned milk powder importers. The 92-93 budget clearly favoured the tinned milk importers with a duty of mere 25 per cent, and worked against the growth of local milk packaging industry by levying 45 per cent duty against bulk imports.

It is strange and curious that the Dairy Federation has not raised any objection against the tinned powder milk importers, who control 80 per cent of the market, nor have they asked for any increase of import duty on that score, but is objecting to lessening of duty on bulk importers who serve a maximum 10 per cent of the market.

In raising its objection against bulk milk importers, the Dairy Federation is ignoring the lessons of developing countries who are trying to create a national industrial base. As stated earlier, local dairy production supplies a maximum of ten per cent of the market. For the rest 90 per cent, Bangladesh's attempt should be to go for as much value addition as possible. This opportunity is created by encouraging the local packaging industry, which will essentially be competing with the tinned importers, and not the local dairy producers. Moreover, with the growth of the packaging industry, there will be a backward linkage leading to local production of quality milk packaging materials, tin cans, etc. In time, the demand of the packaging industry will itself lead to greater production of local fresh milk and to the growth of 'milk districts,' as in India, Thailand and Indonesia.

The experience of these countries show that setting up milk packaging industry is the first step towards industrialisation of the milk and milk powder sector with progressively rising percentage of value addition.

The Dairy Federation is being misled. Based on inadequate understanding of the situation, it is unwittingly falling into the very hands which would harm the growth of national dairy industry by perpetuating our dependence on tinned powder milk imports.

The demand of the Dairy Federation would essentially kill, even before starting, the local packaging industry which will lead to foreign investors becoming disillusioned and shying away from investing here. Such withdrawal of foreign investors would have a disastrous effect on Bangladesh's effort to attract foreign investment.

In contrast to what the Dairy Federation is saying, the government has offered considerable encouragement to the dairy industry by raising import duty from 25 to 30 per cent for retail milk powder and offering various duty reductions and exemptions for import of animal feeds.

If Bangladesh is to seriously pursue its policy of industrialisation — in fact, the alternative is perpetual dependence on aid and handouts — then it must give all sorts of incentives to local investors. The eight packaging companies have already made an estimated investment of Tk 150 crores with a much greater investment to come. Experts feel, that the government should give positive incentive to these investors by further lowering import duty on bulk imports to 15 per cent. As against that, there is no investment worth mentioning of the more 30 companies that only import tinned powder milk.

The emphasis must be given on shifting from this business — as the Finance Minister calls it — of 'rent seeking' and indenting, to one of investment and industrialisation.

The Dairy Federation is being misled. Based on inadequate understanding of the situation, it is unwittingly falling into the very hands which would harm the growth of national dairy industry by perpetuating our dependence on tinned powder milk imports.

আপনি কি জানেন?  
আপনার বিনিয়োগ  
কোথায় সবচেয়ে নিরাপদ?  
কোথায় সর্বোচ্চ মুনাফা পাওয়া যায়?  
কোথায়  
মুনাফা আয়করমুক্ত?  
কোথায় বিনিয়োগে  
আয়কর রেয়াত পাওয়া যায়?

**সঞ্চয়কারীদের জন্য সুবর্ণ সুযোগ**

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার  
কর্তৃক পরিচালিত ও নিয়ন্ত্রিত

৩-বছর মেয়াদী সঞ্চয়পত্র, মুনাফা-১৫%  
৫-বছর মেয়াদী বাংলাদেশ সঞ্চয়পত্র, মুনাফা-১৬%  
৮-বছর মেয়াদী প্রতিরক্ষা সঞ্চয়পত্র, মুনাফা-১৮%

বিস্তারিত তথ্যের জন্য আজই  
যোগাযোগ করুন—

সকল জাতীয় সঞ্চয় অফিস/বুরো, বাংলাদেশ  
ব্যাংক, সকল বাণিজ্যিক ব্যাংকের শাখা ও ডাকঘর।

সঞ্চয়ই স্বনির্ভরতা

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