

Of Central Importance

A state manifests its authority and powers through three channels. It also derives its powers and authority from the selfsame three aspects of a state's being.

This accepted scheme of governance in a modern state has a very bad record of being undermined and even thoroughly sabotaged by the power-duo or the governing parts of the state.

The power-duo has a standard device for sabotaging judiciary, which is ideally a tough impediment to unquestioned power.

A sickly judiciary is the vilest enemy to its own self. It becomes sluggish and its supervisory and monitoring mechanisms, if there be any, dwindle in effectiveness.

On Sunday, the SAARCLAW conference of the most eminent jurists in the region concluded after a series of fruitful sessions.

Better Tested in JS

It is difficult to sound full-throated with the news that winter session of the Jatiya Sangsad has been summoned on January 15.

It is understood that the BNP's ten conditions to the ruling party for rejoining the parliament have been reduced to three: end repression on BNP people, change the Speaker or 'make him neutral', and give full coverage of opposition news and views over BTv.

On alleged repression of BNP party leaders and workers, we reiterate our earlier stand that the opposition must forthwith furnish a list of their followers to the government who purportedly have been prey to ruling party persecution or harassment as claimed.

The Speaker's neutrality is such an operative and functional necessity and it is so very much inherent to the Constitution and the Rules of Procedure that a political party needs hardly make an issue of it in the open.

Just a few days back, the Prime Minister has assured the opposition of full electronic media coverage. Let her government issue an executive order to the radio and television authorities requiring of them to fulfil her promise in letter and spirit.

The winter session of parliament has an important list of agenda with the ratification of the water treaty at the centre of it. We urge the BNP to feel morally, democratically and constitutionally bound to return to parliament following ruling party assurances which can only be tested within the four walls of Jatiya Sangsad.

Umbilical

One has heard of new-borns being lifted out of hospital wards or plainly swapped by the sleight of hands in cohorts with insiders.

Marjina wishing to see her new-born girl at Khulna General Hospital on convalescence had the shock of her life when she was told that it had been stolen.

She had to pay the price for her new-found hygiene consciousness that she ought to travel from her village home to far-away Khulna town to give birth to her child in conditions of relative safety.

Only when the facts will be uncovered in such a test-case that we have any chance of defending the umbilical child right.

Winning the Competitive Battle

Winning the competitive battle would imply establishing a firm foothold on a segment of the market for a particular good or service.

The competitive battle in the global market on the basis of such superficial considerations. There are countries where labour is not only cheap, they are better nourished as well as literate.

A real-life example will clarify the point further. Carpentry is all labour. However an Australian expatriate carpenter work done by one single carpenter from Sydney since he found it cheaper than employing local carpenters for the same job.

In Bangladesh, embroidery skills are well-known and constitute a basic advantage on which we should try to build on.

The adaptation of Grameen Check as an exportable textile is another example of how traditional local skills can be put to good use in winning the competitive battle.



Window on Asia

Shahed Latif

demand. Perhaps, we should move on to power looms for efficiency gains and corner a larger share of the world market.

Winning the competitive battle has several other ramifications. In order to graduate into an emerging tiger, or a cat, does not matter economy. It is not enough to become 'The Tailor of the World'. It is necessary

but not sufficient. Immediately, we must focus on developing new skills on a very large-scale. Leather tanning and manufacture of shoes can be explored since the prospect of labour substitution in that industry is limited.

market leaders. Still it is a good strategy to create a well diversified base of manufacturing where domestic demand is large while products also get sold in international markets.

Therefore, let us focus on the domestic market first. There are 1.5 million TV sets in the country now and the demand is growing at 20 per cent per annum. It is a big enough market to promote manufacturing where subtle protection may be provided through easy consumer credit for purchase of Bangladeshi TVs as well other consumer durable. There are

protective devices which are not outright tariff protection and other emerging tigers have successfully exploited such devices to promote domestic manufacturing in the past and we can do the same now.

If we can enter world markets and secure only one per cent market share of one per cent of these goods and services, our total merchandise exports would amount to \$ 200 per capita (of the projected year 2000 population) which is almost equal to the present per capita income of the country.

However, difficulties are many which we must overcome before we achieve such a well diversified export manufacturing base. Skill development is the key to success and the backlog in this respect may be too big to overcome within a short while.

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State of Human Rights: Global and Bangladesh Perspectives

It is in everybody's interest to outlaw the use of force, preserve peace and set in motion a process of sustainable growth to enable us to build the foundation of a safer, securer and freer world for the posterity, writes Amanullah Khan

FORTY-EIGHT years ago on 10 December, 1948, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which is acknowledged as the magna carta of all mankind.

Underlying the declaration is the recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world as enshrined in the preamble to the declaration.

While remarkable progress has been attained in enforcing and preserving some fundamental rights in pursuit of this momentous declaration, widespread violations, infringement and denial of human rights persist unabated, often with impunity and ruthlessness all over the world.

In Rwanda-Burundi region alone, the bloody tribal conflict between Tutsis and Hutus has so far claimed the lives of over one million people during the last few years in one of the worst exterminations of human race known to history.

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wholesale massacre and the so-called ethnic cleansing.

The spectre of nuclear warfare still looms large, as more and more countries are joining the nuclear club and conducting nuclear tests. This poses a grave threat to the environment as well. Some countries still reportedly hold large stocks of lethal biological and chemical weapons in contravention of international treaties. Tens of thousands of innocent victims were killed or maimed by the landmines which continue to be a danger until cleared.

The scourge of poverty, hunger and deprivation continue to haunt a large section of the world population. Of the total world population of 5.7 billion, about 1.3 billion subsist below the poverty line. The poorest of these poor live in the developing nations. In Bangladesh such poor account for more than 50 per cent of its population who have been held down by an illiteracy rate of about 70 per cent with an unemployment rate of over 50 per cent of its work force.

Women's and children's rights in our country remain a far cry notwithstanding some recent significant steps forward particularly following the Beijing conference. Women's liberation and empowerment in our country still face serious challenges from male domination, social and cultural barriers.

It is an irony that while we talk loudly about the rule of law and the supremacy of law and the ideals of democracy and liberalism, we still cling to the blackest of the black laws, the Special Powers Act which allows a person, including prisoners of conscience and journalists, to be detained by the state without charge or trial for an indefinite period.

Ganges water is a tremendous achievement for Awami League government. After a long period Awami League has taken over the responsibility of government and took it as the first issue to solve the Ganges water problems.

During the past 21 years there was no achievement in this regard. Previous governments tried to make lobbies here and there, so that the problem could be solved internationally. But physically we found nothing remarkable had been done. However, we request the present government to sort out unsettled issues with India through diplomatic process between the two countries, and reach favourable decisions at the earliest as has been done in case of Ganges water.

We must also express our gratitude to Mr. Jyoti Basu, the chief minister of West Bengal. He has played a vital role in sharing of Ganges water in

among teenagers and children from the poor, are being smuggled out of the country. Most of them end up in brothels abroad.

As far as children's rights are concerned, though important breakthrough has been initiated in the garment sector, bonded child labour in other fields and abusing children in general are still prevalent. At present there are about 250 million child labourers in the world most of whom reside in the developing nations.

There is also a thriving illicit and illegal trade in human organs which violates the sanctity of human lives. A large number of our citizens are lured or forcibly taken to the neighbouring states and are compelled to sell their organs, specially kidneys. India has already enacted a law banning such illegal transplantation of human organs.

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age of democracy and should not be allowed to happen in a democratically ruled Bangladesh. Terrorism and violence appear to have become endemic and almost a way of life here. This ban should be stamped out from our body politic so that the rule of law prevails.

Instances of encroachment upon freedom of expression and speech also occurred in the past. Some time back editors of a leading newspaper were arrested, convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for publishing an article that expressed views considered offensive and repugnant. A book titled 'Nari' authored by a university professor was proscribed by the authority after it had been in circulation for several years on the plea that it contained remarks calculated to insult and offend womenfolk.

OPINION

The Traffic Sergeant and I

Recently, one day I was to visit a friend of mine at Banani. Having left my work place (located around road eight in the Dhanmondi Residential Area), I instructed my driver to pick up my wife and daughter from our residence at Central Road near the Hatirpool and proceed towards Banani and advised him to wait in front of the BARC Complex at Farmgate and that I would walk down and join them at an appointed time.

It was about 6:30 pm when I arrived at the appointed place. I noticed from a distance that my chauffeur was engaged in what appeared to be some kind of arguments with a Police Sergeant (Traffic). As I approached them I found that the Sergeant was engaged in writing a traffic violation ticket and that my chauffeur was trying to impress upon him that this was not fair and that it was his first violation of this kind.

Nothing jeopardizes the cause of law and its systems more than the inequality of their application. One of my close friends, an ardent supporter and advocate of the present regime, came to see me the other day all excited and said, 'Look Shamsheer now that forces of Liberation have made a comeback you will see things will continually turn for better. I wish I could be as enthusiastic as he was. I was tempted to ask him as to what he really meant by this and then thought better of it. What forces was he talking about? With our minds, our thoughts and attitudes still at their primitive stages, are we indeed able to understand the true meaning, essence and the values of independence of any kind whether earned through the blood and sweat of our brethren or our forefathers or handed down in a platter. What we need today is a thorough soul-searching, honesty of commitment and the realities of accountability. No more self-indulgence or self-aggrandizement. We must rise quickly and make conscious efforts without fear of consequence, or else none can help us. Finally, I would like to conclude quoting a few verses from a famous Urdu Poet which in English reads as 'Although the defenders of the Faith (Islam) have built the Mosque overnight yet with years of efforts I failed to transform my sinful soul and enter to say prayers.' Way back in 1975 an ex-US-AID veteran, a former boss of mine, one-day made two pungent remarks after he had already worked in the country for nearly six years - which are still fresh in my memory. He said, 'Look Shamsheer the trouble with you Bengalees is that that most of you are so busy keeping your job that you can't do your job.' The other remark was, 'Your problems are people problems i.e. your problems are you.'

writers and editors have the right to articulate their opinion, so should the readers have the right to accept or reject any ideas carried in books or newspapers as they are the best judges to decide for themselves what is good and what is bad.

It is unfortunate that some developed countries of the world by virtue of their dominant position occasionally resort to acts that are interpreted by developing nations as exploiting them and as such considered unjustifiable and unacceptable to them. Dumping toxic wastes and hazardous materials in or near the territorial waters of the developing states causes environmental degradation, export of harmful pesticides and unsafe drugs banned in their own countries, dictating terms of trade unfavourable to the developing countries, a tendency to withhold transfer of technology and the sale of plant and equipment which do not always conform to the stringent safety standards in force in their own countries are examples of such acts. These wrongful acts perpetrated on the developing nations transgress the boundaries of morality and militate against the objectives of equality, fair-play and justice governing the relations between states. They should cease in the interest of sound and stable international partnership and cooperation free from all domination and intimidation.

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The author is the Chairman of Issues and Policies Research Centre (IPRC). The article is the abridged version of an address delivered recently at a national seminar organised by Bangladesh Human Rights Commission to observe the 48th Year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

To the Editor

Cause of unnatural death

Sir, The bright star of the country's filmdom, Salman Shah, breathed his last few months ago. There was much hue and cry about his unnatural premature death. But actual reason of his death still remains unearthed. If the reason of death of such an extraordinary person remains mysterious, it is doubtful whether justice be applied in case of a common man's unnatural death.

We hope, the authority concerned should be serious to expose the real cause of such unnatural death of whoever he or she is.

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Ganges water

Sir, Of late, we are proud to take serious decisions. Reaching decision on sharing of

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