In Quest of Ethics in Asian Governance

by Professor Chandra Muzaffar

The question is: can humankind create a sound ethical basis for governance if in the exercise of our temporal, transient power and authority on earth we are not prepared to submit to an eternal, transcendent power and authority that lies beyond our control?

HAT Asian leaders are conscious of the importance of ethics or moral values in the governance of their societies is to state the obvious. A number of national declarations and proclamations contain pointed references to ethical principles and moral values.

In practice, various Asian governments and societies have attempted to adhere to certain moral principles. If we regard looking after the basic needs of the people - food, shelter, education, health, security - as a fundamental moral obligation of the state, then the Singapore leadership has been an ethical leadership. Likewise, if we regard tolerance for different points of view in politics as a moral value then the Indian political system has an ethical dimension to it. A government or society may be ethical in one sphere and yet lack moral principles in another sphere.

By and large however most Asian societies have failed to live up to the high moral principles embodied in the religious and cultural philosophies of the region. Using some of the moral concerns of Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hin-

duism, Islam and Taoism as basic guidelines, we have come up with ten forms of ethical transgression which have occurred in various Asian coun-

- 1. The persistence of abject poverty, elementary infant diseases and illiteracy among the masses.
- 2. Oppression and exploitation of the poor and powerless, the weak and vulnerable in society.
- 3. The spread of a materialistic culture denoted by conspicuous consumption at the elite
- 4. Corruption and greed at various strata of society but especially at the apex.
- 5. Lack of accountability in government and administration and the lack of transparency in commerce and industry.

6. The concentration of power within the elite stratum of society, the restriction of public participation in political decision-making and the suppression of dissent.

7. Discrimination against women, stress and strain within the family and the disintegration of the com-

munity. The intensification of communal hatred, cultural chauvinism and religious

bigotry.

9. Apathy towards the quest for knowledge and neglect of science and the indigenous arts.

10. The degradation of the physical environment and the rapid depletion of natural resources with little regard for the wellbeing of future generations.

If there have been violations of ethical norms, it is because elite interests - the desire to perpetuate power or wealth or both - have taken precedence over moral values. Sometimes these interests express themselves in the form of authoritarian political structures or well-entrenched oligarchies of wealth. When that happens it becomes difficult to check the abuse of power, still less to articulate ethical alternatives.

However, it is not just existing elite interests or structures that impede the emergence of ethical societies in Asia. Prejudices inherited from antiquity and feudal attitudes from the past have also, in some instances, hindered the growth of a moral outlook within certain

by Jim Davis

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segments of the populace. It can be argued that colonial rule with its devastating impact upon the mind and soul of Asia was perhaps an even greater obstacle to the development of the moral personality of the Asian For it created in the Asian deep sense of inferiority - it continues to manifest itself to this day - which led to the repudiation of one's own moral and spiritual heritage.

Even today, in the post colo-

nial era, it is not easy to nurture

and nourish societies guided by those eternal, universal values which lie at the heart of our illustrious religious and cultura traditions. For globalisation whatever its positive attributes - marginalises ethical considerations in politics, economics, culture and societal relationships. By legitimising and institutionalising the unfettered pursuit of power and the insatiable desire for wealth, the globalisation process has transformed the very meaning of morality. In other words, it has become moral to acquire as much wealth as possible in the most avaricious and exploitative manner and then donate part of one's ill-gotten riches to charity - in order to be draped

in saintly garb. This is why apart from creating avenues for interrogating power and wealth and strengthening citizens groups within a particular society, the time has come to establish a global movement to check the erosion of moral values and ethical principles in politics and government, economics and business, culture and media and indeed in every other sphere of human activity. We have to recognise that in the ultimate analysis our estrangement from ethics in governance arises from notions of power and wealth which are devoid of a moral foundation.

The question is: can humankind create a sound ethical basis for governance if in the exercise of our temporal, transient power and authority on earth we are not prepared to submit to an eternal, transcendent power and authority that lies beyond our control?

ternational Movement for-Just World (JUST), Malaysia.

27 Years after Independence: Sins and Senses

by Ekram Kabir

It is essential today for every citizen, not just women, to break out of the barriers of injustice, be that in national policies, social preconceptions, or prejudices.

ISDOM has it that denying the rights of the majority and getting ready only with a few for the future is not right; and when it comes to degrading women and children, it is a sin. Yes, here we are talking about the ill-fated women and children of Bangladesh who are living in fear of being raped, and who are malnourished or undernourished.

Since the nonchalant attitude of the pre-independence rulers towards the majority was the driving force of our liberation struggle, implications of the same are worth taking into account given the present-day socio-economic situation. The media are already saturated with reports of Yasmeen, Seema, Tania, Mousumi and many more. These are perturbing signals of a decaying society. But his nefarious situation was not warranted, because we definitely visualised that no woman would fall prey to what we experienced during the War of Independence. We vowed to heal the wounds of our three million girls and women.

Apparently every progressive ideology at the national level is laden with high-sounding promises for socio-economic emancipation of women, thereby for making their lives more worthy than in the past, but the ideologies are not working because the women are failing to find any guarantee for security in society - for example, well, there's no dearth of this - at the workplaces, educational institutions, and even at places like CMM court building. In today's busy urban streets or pastoral rural villages, more than before women are seen going energetically and competently about their every-day business. But they are not at all

It was reported in January last citing source of the human rights organisations and the police that "repression on women showed a sharp increase in the country during the year 1997." It said, among abundant ways of coercion, as many as 420 women were killed and 487 raped last year. Of these, more than 100 were killed following disputes over dowry, while 26 became victims of 'fatwa'; and about 200 girls have reportedly received injuries from acidthrowing. The report further

says that of the violated 487.

192 were minor girls. Even after 27 years since independence, if this is the social destiny of our women, then Bangladesh society is definitely undergoing a "moral starvation". The nature of these rapes is paralysing the sane section. One's anger turns into sickness and becomes intense when

The report, however, did not focus on the socio-economic status of victims of the recorded misdoings, yet taking past and recent figures of maltreatment of women in Bangladesh as the yardstick, it can be concluded that the majority of sufferers were from the grassroots.

members of the law enforcing

personnel are seen as offenders.

Devastating effects of physical violence on women leave not only scar on the person and mind, but also loss of self-esteem of the victim. A battered woman often feels that she, and only she, is living out this particular nightmare. That loneliness is part of the shame that is part of the silence where she ultimately diminishes. And sadly, recent numbers show how very common is that lonely woman's struggle.

For these women, the society provides weak refuge; the inef fective law, little or no protection; and public opinion, even less empathy. Given the alarming rise in rapes, these cannot be termed as "crimes"; these are unpardonable "sins" against humanity which were also experienced 27 years ago. And that is why it's time this issue is seriously dealt with. Since the law enforcing agents have already lost public trust in this respect, there's a questionmark on who will punish whom.

It is always said that 'right without 'remedy' is like fish out of water. Both right and remedy are therefore needed to be looked at as integral parts Committed attention needs to be emphasised not only to recognise the "rights", but also the "nature" of the right and its enforceability. Here the role of the media becomes very important. There should be a close working cooperation among the rights-activists, truly enlightened individuals, social services organisations and, especially, the journalists. Because women here are always prone to fall victim and majority of them live below subsistence level. And only due to the pro-

hibitive cost of litigation, they cannot even think of approaching the court of law, and always deny themselves of justice. These disadvantaged women do not know that to end their abysmal ordeal, individuals and groups can initiate 'public interest litigation' already originated by the court here in Bangladesh. Now, women in general have to be informed

about the litigation procedures.

But our sin doesn't end here: there's another way of subjugating the women. Trafficking the selling of women and children for monetary profit, most often leading to bonded prostitution - has come to be one of the most visible topics here. The media are news-logged with stories of women and children sold to sex slavery, where they are deprived of their most basic human rights. Traffickers are harming the society, perhaps. more than what the political terrorists are doing. This is going on unabated even after social movements in Bangladesh are actively involved with this

Take 'one' among 'many' re-

ports, sixteen children of Bangladesh recently came back here after having languished in a jail in the southern Indian city of Bangalore for the last six months. These children in the age group of three to eight were allegedly being taken to the Gulf for camel racing. They were in the Bangalore Central Jail since September last year together with 12 adults who claimed to be their parents. According to the same report, a city magistrate ordered that they be freed and allowed to return to Bangladesh. Representatives of a Bangladeshi Women Lawyers' Association were reported to have gone to Calcutta. Seven men and five women from Bangladesh were arrested at the Bangalore airport on September 14 last year together with the 16 children, as they were about to board a flight to Dubai on suspicion that the children were being taken to the Gulf to be made jockeys in camel races.

According to some Bangladeshi women who were arrested, they were all the "victims" of a huge fraud. The report said, 'the middlemen told them that if they paid one lakh rupees (Rs. 100,000=\$2,600) he would take them to Dubai where

their husbands would get good jobs and their life could be comfortable. They knew nothing about camel races and that their children were being taken

for that. Now, trafficking is caused not just by poverty. The recent market-oriented economic policies, especially the liberalisation and privatisation, have opened up the labour markets and spurred the tempo of trafficking.

In our context, it's more of a trafficking mode. Even if they go through some employment agencies, they don't know where they are going, what they are going to do, how much money they are going to get for it, and for how long. As mentioned, they don't know, they end up at the brothels -- from where there is no way to escape, and they end up in sex slavery. If they want to come back, they can't. Some women manage to escape and come back but they are not accepted by their community, so they have to turn to prostitution in their home

We look at a number of factors when we decide whether a person was trafficked - had she been told where she would be going? Was she told what she would be doing?

There can be two proposals to remedy all these ills: one is a regional court to deal with the issue, because it's a cross-border issue, one country can't deal with it. Another is a regional convention to check it from taking place. No woman, no girl, should live helplessly any longer under the shadow of any fear. They want life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness they want respect for the role they play in the society. And finally, they want recognition for their dedication and sacrifice. It is essential today for ev-

ery citizen, not just women, to break out of the barriers of injustice, be that in national policies, social preconceptions, or prejudices - to treat every woman equally with dignity and respect and to measure up to the high ideals and laws. The authority concerned must hold accountable those who violate laws through abuse of power or position, harassment, exploitation or discrimination. If we fail in our promise, the better half of the country will lose faith in the fruits of indepen-

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A GIRL IN A WALLED VILLA NEAR ZURICH IS BRING WATCHED BY JAMES BOND AND MI-6 AGENT SAZI KRW...

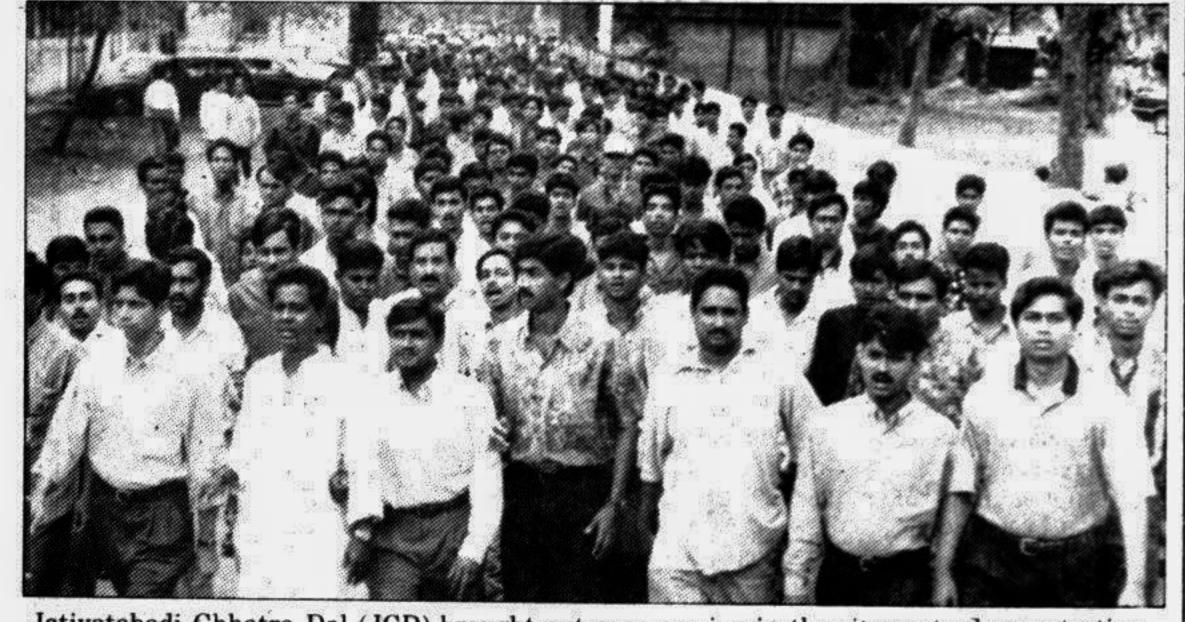




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------Metropolitan --



Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) brought out a procession in the city yesterday protesting the show-cause notices served by the Dhaka University authorities on its 6 central - Star photo

Experts suggest at a workshop in city

Use of tubewell water can help prevent groundwater arsenic contamination

By Staff Correspondent

Experts at a workshop yesterday proposed for options of continued use of groundwater. that provides 97 per cent of the rural population of Bangladesh with tubewell water, would be the best choice for the time being in the face of groundwater arsenic contamination.

However, options for use of arsenic-free surface water and rainwater harvesting was not

The chief guest while addressing the participants at the two-day workshop on measurement and strategies for arsenic in drinking water at field level. World Health Organisation (WHO) representative in Bangladesh Dr W Hardjotanojo said, "WHO has been supporting the government by providing internationally recognised consultants. WHO's consultation has provided the government with an opportunity for the experts to exchange experiences and findings on the prob-lem on both sides of the border

between India and Bangladesh." Dr Quazi Quamruzzaman, Chairman of Dhaka Community Hospital Trust while delivering his paper on 'future policy formulation' said, "All tubewells (TW) being installed should be registered and have a data base information. Some of the TWs have no data on how deep they are which cause great difficulty in assessing the layer of arsenic contamination of a

particular TW." Dr Quamruzzaman, the mas-

ter designer of the field level arsenic patient identification in the country, also said, "there are different types of 'yes-no' field-kits available some of which are not reliable. I feel that there should be 'standard' test kits to allow accuracy in investigations." Professor A Majumdar of All

Govt urged to settle disputes of Cane Company workers

By Staff Correspondent Jatiya Sramik Federation (JSF) yesterday called upon the government to settle the dispute following termination of the workers of Bangladesh Cane Company in consultation with CBA leaders.

Bangladesh Cane Company of Chittagong under Bangladesh Steel and Engineering Corporation was privatized recently. and the workers were terminated with effect from February

The JSF leaders at a press conference held in the city claimed that the rules of privatisation were not followed in the case. Promises made by the government regarding privatisation were not also reflected in this particular case, they said.

India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health while delivering his paper on 'methodology for removal of arsenic in groundwater' said, "arsenic concentration goes down considerably if groundwater with arsenic are treated through oxidation, sedimentation and filtration

steps."
Sharing his experiences of installing arsenic removal plants in the affected areas in West Bengal of India Majumdar said, "We have designed a handpump attached arsenic removal plant in Ashokenagar using 'oxicoflocsedfil' method. The method extensively removes arsenic present in water."

Nat'l Disaster Preparedness Day today

National Disaster Preparedness Day, fixed by the government on the last day of March, will be observed in national and district level for the first today, reports UNB.

The government has decided to observe the day every year with an objective to create mass awareness about various natural calamities so that people can take proper precaution to face those and keep the loss of properties at the minimal level.

This year, the theme is "Cyclone is the main cause for the loss of lives, resources and environment in Bangladesh."



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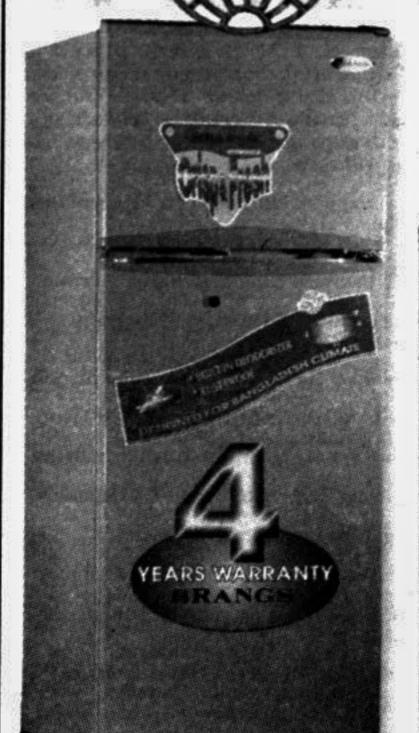
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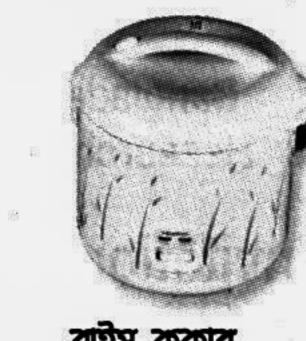
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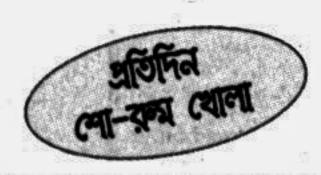






আপনি বাড়ীতে না থাকলেও স্বয়ংক্রিয়ভাবে ভাত অথবা পোলাও রারা হয়ে থাকবে





ডিপ ফ্রিজ

পুরস্কার ও উপহার লাভের সুযোগ ঈদ-উল-আয়হা পর্যন্ত চলবে।

দেশব্যাপী আমাদের যে কোন সেলস্ও সার্ভিস সেন্টারে আপনারা সাদরে আমন্ত্রিত 🖵 ঢাকা পুরানা পল্টন ফোনঃ ৯৫৬৩৪৩২-৩৩, বিজয় সরণি ফোনঃ ৮১৮৮৮০-৮১, সোনারগাঁও রোড ফোনঃ ৯৬৬৩৫৫৬, ক্রিসেন্ট সেন্টার ৩৬ তোপখানা রোড ফোনঃ ৯৫৫৫৫১৯, গুলশান ফোন ঃ ৮৭১৫৭৬, ৯৮৮০৫১৬, উত্তরা ফোন ঃ ৮৯১৯৭১, মিরপুর রোকেয়া সরণী ফোন ঃ ৯০০৫৮৪৩, দারুস সালাম রোড মিরপুর-১, ইব্রাহিমপুর ঢাকা ক্যান্টনমেন্ট ফোনঃ ৯৮৭১৯৩৯, মালেক প্লাজা খিলগাঁও রেলগেট ফোনঃ ৯৩৪৮৩০৩, লালমাটিয়া ব্লক-এ ফোনঃ ৯১১৮৩২৮, পলওয়েল সুপার মার্কেট ফোনঃ ৯৩৪৬০৮৪, জিনজিরা বাস রোড (হাউলী) ফোনঃ ২৩৮২০১, ধোলাইরপাড় যাত্রাবাড়ী ফোনঃ ০১৭৫৩৩৩১১ 🗆 সাভার ফোন ঃ ৩৫৪ 🗅 নারায়ণগঞ্জ ফোন ঃ ৯৭১২৮৩২ 🗅 চউগ্রাম ওয়াসা কর্ণার ফোন ঃ ৬১১৩৩৪, ৬২১৭৩৯, আগ্রাবাদ ফোন ঃ ৭১২৮১০ 🖵 কক্সবাজার ফোনঃ ৩৩০৩ 🖵 খুলনা ফোনঃ ৭২২৬০৫ 🖵 সাতক্ষীরা ফোনঃ ২৪২৪ 🖵 যশোহর ফোনঃ ৭২২৬৪ 🗖 রাজশাহী ফোনঃ ৭৭৪৬৭৫ 🗖 নাটোর ফোনঃ ৬৯১৬ 🗖 পাবনা ফোনঃ ৬২২৭ 🗆 ঈশ্বরদী ফোনঃ ৩০৬ 🗅 কুষ্টিয়া ফোনঃ ৫৫২০৬ 🗅 সিরাজগঞ্জ ফোনঃ ৭৩০৪১ 🗅 বগুড়া নবাববাড়ী ফোনঃ ৪৯০৪, ৭২৪৪৪, দত্তবাড়ী ফোনঃ ৬৫৭২ 🗅 জয়পুরহাট পৌর বিপণি সদর রোড 🖵 নওগাঁ ফোন ঃ ২১০৯ 🖵 সিলেট ফোন ঃ ৭১০১৭১ 🖵 মৌলভি বাজার ফোন ঃ ৫৩৭০৭ 🖵 ব্রাহ্মণবাড়িয়া ফোন ঃ ৫২৫৮৯ 🖵 ময়মনসিংহ ফোন ঃ ৫৪৮৮১

এ সুযোগ আমাদের ডিলারদের কাছেও পাবেন।