

"All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law" Article 27 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Human Rights and Development

Examining the Right to Adequate Housing in a Development Context

by A.H. Monjurul Kabir

Lack of housing for human resources and potential work force or denial of this right, by way of forced eviction seriously endanger the development activities and undermines human dignity. The anti-slum drive, violating right to housing in Bangladesh leading to homelessness and untold sufferings of thousands of poverty stricken people amply testifies this.

More than one billion persons around the world do not reside in adequate housing and one million people have no home at all (The Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000). During the next generation, the global urban population will double, from 2.5 billion to 5 billion people. Almost all of the increase will be in developing countries. One third of the developing world's urban population lives in extreme poverty. To most of them, housing means living in squalid and unsafe squatters' settlement or slums.

The need for a secure place to live for human dignity, physical and mental health and over all quality of life can only be culminated through adequate housing. Housing plays a significant role in providing basic amenities like access to drinking water and adequate sanitation facilities. The states of health, education, environment, participation, community service etc. are also inextricably linked with housing. In fact housing has a substantial stake in development activities. Adequate housing finds explicit recognition within a broad spectrum of international instruments, e.g., Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, Article 25(1)), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, Article 11(1)), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD, Article 5(e)(iii)), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, Article 27), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, Article 14(2)), the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Article 21) etc.

Sadly there is still a dearth of understanding and recognition of this one of the most basic human needs and fundamental requisites of standard living in many parts of the world especially in developing countries. Many states simply try to exploit the 'progressive attainability' of state obligation towards this right for evading their responsibility. This article focuses briefly on the changing global trend of considering development as a sustainable human progresses rather than a mere growth oriented notion. Following this introduction it explores the scope of the right to adequate housing. It then intends to examine the inter-relationship between the right to adequate housing and the changed notion of development.

Towards A Human Face of Development?

Defining development in terms of growth in per capita gross domestic product (GDP) or equating development with economic growth or economic development solely was a common phenomenon existed with domination in the last century. Most of the development projects were designed to achieve objectives whose success was measured primarily in economic terms. Traditional analyses primarily looked at economic indicators, the state of infrastructure, agri-

cultural output, demographic data and so on.

From the last few decades of the 20th century there has been a number of initial efforts under way seeking to explore the human face of development. One major mainstream response to concerns over blocked or distorted development has been to emphasize sustainable growth. More radical alternatives to growth-based concept of development have emphasized equity or social justice. A growing process of convergence in the theory and practice of human rights and development particularly as they relate to the lives of people living in poverty and social isolation has been reflected in the series of recent UN conferences. The 1993 World Conference on Human Rights acknowledged that "Democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing." Heads of State and Government at the 1995 World Summit for Social Development pledged themselves "to a vision for social development" based on, among other things, "human dignity, human rights and equality".

Efforts to narrow the gaps both in action and in understanding between human rights organizations and development agencies are also noted. One significant expression of this is the work of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in its Human Development Report. In 1998, it also announces its policy document 'Integrating human rights with sustainable human development' which is viewed as a major shift in its approach towards development. James Gustav Speth, Administrator, UNDP, categorically stated,

"UNDP advocates the realisation of human rights as part of sustainable human development, an approach that places people at the centre of all development activities. The central purpose is to create an enabling environment in which all human beings lead secure and creative lives. Sustainable human development is directed towards the promotion of human dignity and the realisation of all human rights, economic, social, cultural, civil and political." The most recent Human Development Report (2000) of the UNDP also reflects this realization. It attempts to bridge human rights with human development.

The World Bank Group lately recognised that it had an express role to play in the promotion and protection of human rights. In its recent publication (Development and Human Rights: The Role of the World Bank), the Bank asserts, "The world now accepts that sustainable development is impossible without human rights. What has been missing is the recognition that the advancement of an interconnected set of

human rights is impossible without development."

Major international donor agencies now refocus their international development efforts to reduce poverty. They now support policies, which create sustainable livelihoods for poor people, foster human development, promote human rights and conserve the environment.

Scope

The indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights find unequivocal expression through the right to housing. Housing is globally seen as a primary base for meaningful enjoyment of a multitude of other rights, e.g. right to freedom of expression, the right to freedom of association (such as for tenants and other community-based groups), the right to freedom of residence, the right to participate in public decision making. Equally the right to security of person (in the case of forced or arbitrary evictions or any other forms of harassment) and the right not to be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with one's privacy, family, home or correspondence constitutes a very important dimension in defining the right to adequate housing. In fact housing is a foundation from which other legal entitlements can also be achieved, e.g., the adequacy of one's housing and living condition is closely linked to the degree to which the right to environmental hygiene and the right to the highest attainable level of mental and physical health can be enjoyed. In view of the Committee on the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), "the right to housing should not be interpreted in a narrow and restrictive sense which equates it with, for example, the shelter provided by merely having a roof over one's head or views shelter exclusively as a commodity. Rather it should be seen as the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity." The reference in article 11(1) must be read as not just to housing but to adequate housing.

In fact, the right to adequate housing has drew the attention of the Committee more than any other rights contained in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In its Sixth session the Committee adopted a detail General Comment covering a wide range of aspects of the right. The component of adequacy associated with this right has been interpreted in terms of 'legal security of tenure', 'availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure', 'affordability', 'habitability', 'accessibility' and 'location'. Both the Commission on Human Settlements and Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 have asserted that adequate shelter means adequate

privacy, adequate space, adequate security, adequate lighting and ventilation, adequate basic infrastructure and adequate location with regard to work and basic facilities all at a reasonable cost."

The Committee also deals with the crucial issue of forced eviction. In 1991, it had stated that 'instances of forced eviction are prima facie incompatible with the requirements of the Covenant and can only be justified in the most exceptional circumstances, and in accordance with the relevant principles in international law'. Subsequently, the Committee having considered a significant number of forced eviction reports including instances in which State parties had violated their obligations, decided to issue another detailed General Comment regarding forced evictions. The Committee defined the term as 'permanent or temporary removal against their will of individuals, families and/or communities from the homes and/or land which they occupy, without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection.' According to the Committee, forced evictions manifestly breach the rights enshrined in the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In addition, the practice of forced evictions may also result in 'violations of civil and political rights, such as the right to life, the right to the security of the person, the right to non-interference with privacy, family and home and the right to peaceful enjoyment of possession'.

The Interlink

The Declaration on the Right to Development (DRD) is one of many declarations and international instruments that stress the indivisibility and interdependence of human rights. As aptly pointed out by United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson, "By placing the individual at the centre of development activities and proclaiming an integrated vision of human rights, the Declaration is a vehicle for the indivisibility and complementarity of different categories of human rights and for recognising the promotion and protection of all human rights as the basis and measure of sustainable development."

The DRD regards human rights as both a condition and objective of development; its aim was to respond concerns regarding the existence of serious obstacles to development, as well as to the complete fulfillment of human beings and of peoples, constituted, *inter alia*, by the denial of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Clearly there emerges a potent link between the right to adequate housing and development as the former ensures the full enjoyment of a host of rights by

individuals having placed at the centre of all development activities. Lack of housing for human resources and potential work force or denial of this right e.g., by way of forced eviction seriously endanger the development activities and undermines human dignity. Such deprivation also turns any endeavour for achieving even fulfillment of human beings into a sheer mockery. The anti-slum drive, violating right to housing in Bangladesh leading to homelessness and untold sufferings of thousands of poverty stricken people actively contributing to development process amply testifies this. Such instances are common phenomena in many developing countries of the world.

Housing also influences the concept of meaningful participation, a key in the development process. Both the World Bank and the UNDP now endorse greater popular participation in the practice of their economic programs. In order to eradicate poverty and achieve environmental sustainability, it will be necessary to shift from traditional top-down approaches to development, which often amount to the imposition of a social welfare system, to bottom up approaches. This calls for the full participation of all citizens in socio-political processes and in the planning and implementation of socio-economic development programs. Full participation of all will require the creation of an enabling political environment, decentralization of decision making to the local level, and explicit measures to empower the poor in general and women in particular, so that they may be able to include their socio-economic priorities in national, regional and local development plans and participate fully in the implementation of those plans.

Housing creates an enabling environment for participation, especially at local and community level. Active, free and meaningful participation in development cannot be attained without adequate provision for housing. In fact the concept of freedom of association, guaranteed by so many international treaties and ILO mechanism, finds secured place in community housing, e.g., tenants and other community groups. The 1986 Declaration also emphasizes the importance of participation.

UNDP's vision of sustainable growth also confirms this interlink. Human development is defined as expanding the choices for all in society in terms of five aspects: empowerment, co-operation, equity, sustainability and security. Adequate housing empowers people, increases their capability and choice, assists them to co-operate with each other, create a feeling of fraternity within a community, enhances the access to basic amenities,

creates a desire for equitable environment and sustains it for future generation. Most importantly, it devises a sense of both personal and social security against odds and oppression or sudden unwarranted and detrimental interference and disruptions. The multifaceted roles of this right having a clear impact on development have already been discussed. With regard to forced or arbitrary eviction, which constitutes a gross violation of human rights, in particular the right to adequate housing, it is apparent that eviction vitiates the environment necessary for social and human development. Women, children and youth, indigenous peoples, ethnic, racial, religious or other minorities, low-income social groups, occupied populations and those without legal security of tenure tend to suffer disproportionately from the practice of forced eviction or displacement. In fact eviction frustrates and demoralises the potential work force. By its very nature, displacement is a disruptive and painful process. Economically and culturally ... it creates a high risk of impoverishment that typically occurs along one or several of the following dimensions: landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalisation, food insecurity, morbidity and social disarticulation.

Cities without Slum: A Dream or a Distant Reality?

The foregoing discussion attempts to show that development is no longer a growth oriented, GDP based calculation rather it resembles very much with a people-centred, participatory and sustainable human condition and goal, that adequate housing is a host of rights, a precondition for human dignity and sustainable development, that forced eviction is a flagrant denial and violation of the right to housing, which destroys the essential environment considered *sine qua non* for development programmes and initiatives.

The World Bank and the United Nations initiated a global alliance of cities and their development partners. A challenging 'Cities without slums' action plan was launched in December 1999. It aims to improve the lives of 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. In the words of Kofi Annan, "It requires world leaders to commit themselves to, and the international development community to focus on, improving the living conditions of the urban poor. I strongly support the 'Cities without Slums' initiative and ask all Member States and to act on it." No doubt the giant initiative like this is reflective of the growing concern towards right to adequate housing as a development agenda at global level. The latest decision of appointing a Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing by the Commission on Human Rights in its fifty-sixth session also signifies this global endeavour.

Oliver Twist Brought Alive

Odhikar

On 16 July 2000, an Odhikar investigator went to the Shorkari Bobbhoghurey Ashoy Kendra, located in Mirpur, Dhaka. Despite the fact that the investigator was not permitted to speak to the Superintendent of the shelter without a letter of authorisation from the Director General, Ministry of Social Welfare, he was able to retrieve vital information as to the condition of some of the inmates by questioning women and children who were freed on that day. This is a report on what he found.

The said shelter at Mirpur is built on about four acres of land and surrounded by a high wall. There is a police box nearby and the main building has a verandah closed in by an iron grille.

Around the shelter many people were waiting for the release of their relatives kept there. The Odhikar investigator managed to talk to the relatives and some of the children who were released. Their case studies are given below:

Nurunnabi (9): Nurunnabi's mother, Monowara Begum had come to the Mirpur shelter, with a male relative, from Kalibari in Bhola. On learning that her son had been taken there, she contacted the shelter authorities, identified her son and submitted the relevant documents to the authorities. On his release on 16 July 2000 (the day of this investigation), Nurunnabi told the Odhikar investigator that he had accompanied his friend to Dhaka from Bhola on a launch. On docking at Shadarghat launch terminal, his friend got lost. Police took Nurunnabi to Kothwall thana from where he was transferred to the shelter. He had been in the shelter for one month and ten days.

On talking about his stay in the shelter, Nurunnabi said that he had stayed with thirty-nine other boys in a large room on the upper floor of the shelter. The room had only one fan and all the boys slept on the floor. On asking him whether he had had enough to eat, he said that breakfast and dinner consisted of two chapattis and some lentils while lunch was a plate of rice and either more lentils or some vegetable. Once a week they were given meat, fish or eggs. Nurunnabi said that the boys were never allowed outside or beyond the grille covered verandah. There is a lavatory outside the boys' room, but it is very dirty and unhygienic.

Nurunnabi's friends in the shelter were Babul (8) and Lana (9). Babul was picked up by police in Gullistan and has been in the shelter for two years while Lana was picked up in Shadarghat and has been in it for a year. No one has yet come to claim them.

Moinuddin (12): Moinuddin was released from the shelter the same day as Nurunnabi. He lives in the Nawabganj area of Lalbagh in Dhaka. On 10 July 2000, he was returning home with some friends after watching a movie. Near Sadarghat he was picked up by police and taken to Kothwall thana from where he was transferred to the shelter. He told the Odhikar investigator that the meals the residents were given were insubstantial and they stayed hungry. Moinuddin said that if the boys asked for more food, the police beat them with belts. There is a television in the shelter, but the residents are not allowed to watch it.

Shefal (18): Shefal, too, was released on 16 July 2000, along with another girl, Nipa, whose story is narrated below. Before she was picked up by the police, Shefal was employed in a garment-manufacturing factory. On 14 July 2000, at about nine o'clock in the night, Shefal was picked up by the police at Shadarghat, while on her way home from the factory. She was taken to Kothwall thana and then to the shelter. She told the police that she was employed in a garment factory, but they paid no attention to her.

Nipa (16): Ms. Matul Islam, a businesswoman had come to collect his niece, Nipa, from the shelter. He lives in Mohammadpur, Dhaka. Matul Islam told the investigator that on 12 July 2000, Nipa left her house to go for a walk. Police picked her up and took her to Mohammadpur thana from where she was taken to the shelter in Mirpur. He failed to understand that despite telling the police her address, why the police took her to the shelter instead of taking her home.

The investigator also managed to talk to an employee of the shelter, who wanted to remain anonymous. He informed the investigator that there were a total of 336 women and girls and 32 boys of various ages in the shelter and that the government allocates Taka 450 per head per month for their upkeep. He admitted that the boys were often substandard and sometimes puffed. He also said that young boys were beaten by the police if they had been 'naughty'. He told the investigator that if the shelter's capacity became full, inmates were shipped out to other shelters around the country.

On reading this report, one may wonder if we have yet come out of the Victorian age, when workhouses were notorious for their mistreatment of young boys. The results of the investigation seem to have popped out from a page of Oliver Twist, even to the point where the boys are beaten by the police if they dare ask for MORE. Girls are picked up at random, no investigations are carried out if they have an address or can state a place of employment. There are no means or attempts to inform parents of lost children (if the child can give an address). They are not fed properly, there is no hygiene. Resources for the on-spot investigation were limited, but two things strike the mind: are the residents of the shelter kept there to protect them or to punish them? Does random, unaccounted picking up of young people fill a quota that the police have to maintain, regardless of whether the young person or child was out for a walk or genuinely lost? There have been various excellent studies regarding shelter homes, vagrant homes and juvenile centres around the country. All have recommendations to offer in order to improve the condition of the residents and inmates therein. With their work cut out for them, why does the concerned authority not do anything to at least try to alleviate some of the problems highlighted?

This investigation was carried out by Odhikar a coalition for human rights in partnership with the Bangladesh Freedom Foundation.

The Caged Parrot

Anees Jillani writes from Islamabad

On June 22, the Federal Minister for Information disclosed that a law to make public information accessible to the people of Pakistan is pending with the Cabinet. During the parliamentary days, it was a constant excuse that certain bills remained pending with various standing committees of the two Houses of Parliament; some of them remained pending for almost half a decade. One of the advantages of a non-democratic setup is that the legislative process could literally be expedited at an unprecedented speed. General Zia, in this regard, was an exception as he had more important things on his mind but one can only hope that General Musharraf's Government would not follow the footsteps of General Ziaul Haq and would be different. Unfortunately, its record during the past months leaves much to be desired in this regard.

On January 29, 1997, the caretaker Government of PM Moin Qureshi enacted the Freedom of Information Ordinance (No XV). All Ordinances are only valid for a period of four months under Article 89(2)(a) of the Constitution unless validated by an act of Parliament; this was not done with the present law and it thus lapsed and has till date not been revived by any successive governments. Nawaz Sharif kept promising to enact an act of Parliament based on this Ordinance but it remained stuck with a Parliamentary Standing Committee. The former PM now has all the time in the world to contemplate as to why the law could not be introduced in reasonable time. The 1997 Ordinance was based on the premise that transparency and freedom of information are the essence of good governance and improved access to public

record is necessary to ensure that the people of Pakistan are better informed about the management of their affairs and the Government is made more accountable to the people.

Section 3 of the Ordinance declared the following record of all public offices to be public record:

- (a) instructions, policies and guidelines;
 - (b) record relating to sale, purchase, lease, mortgage, acquisition or transfer in any other manner of properties both movable and immovable;
 - (c) record pertaining to approvals, consents, permissions, concessions, benefits, privileges, licenses, contracts, permits, agreements, and any other advantages; and
 - (d) final orders including decisions taken at all meetings.
- Nothing contained in section 3, however, applied to:
- (a) notes on files, minutes of meetings and interim orders;
 - (b) record of the banking companies and financial institutions relating to the accounts of their customers;
 - (c) record declared as classified under the policy made by the Government;
 - (d) record relating to the personal privacy of an individual; and
 - (e) record of private documents furnished to a public office either on an express or implied condition that information contained in any such document shall not be disclosed to a third person (section 4).
- The Ordinance further required every public office to designate an official for the purposes of this Ordinance. If no such official is designated or in the event of the absence or non-availability of the designated

official, the person in charge of the public office could be the designated official (section 5). This law entitled any citizen of Pakistan, upon payment of the prescribed fee, to make written application to the designated official for obtaining the information contained in any public record including copy of any such record. The designated official was bound within 21 days of the receipt of the request to supply to the applicant the required information including copy of such record. Any public record that had been published in an official Gazette or in the form of book offered for sale was not required to be so supplied (section 6).

If the applicant was not provided the information in question within the prescribed time or the designated official refused to give the information or copy on the ground that the applicant was not entitled to receive such information or copy, the applicant could, within 30 days of the last date prescribed for giving the information or copy or the communication of the designated official's order declining to give the information, file a complaint with the Federal Ombudsman appointed under Article 3 of the Establishment of Office of Wafaqi Mohtasib (Ombudsman) Order 1983 (PO 1). The Ombudsman was empowered to direct the designated official to give the information or as the case may be, the copy of the record or may reject the complaint. The decision of the Mohtasib was to be final (section 7).

The 1997 Ordinance left much to be desired. Nevertheless, it was a step forward and improvements could have been brought about over a period of time in that law. It is almost always a nightmare to attempt to obtain any kind of

information from a government functionary. Almost all the bureaucracy in the country appears to be secretly united to use devious and undercover means to conceal information. The government has always appeared to be a secret clique operating behind closed doors, inaccessible to the common citizenry. In fact, this has been its source of power.

This culture is gradually changing all over. The right of access to information has assumed prominence in the contemporary world with the spread of democratic culture and the increasing credence given to people's participation in the process of sustainable development. It is being increasingly viewed as fundamental to the realization of economic and social rights as well as civil and political rights. It is now being appreciated that effective democracy requires informed participation by all. Having been left out of the process of governance and due to poverty and illiteracy, the majority of the population in Pakistan cannot comprehend the processes that affect their lives. Suppression of information by the State thus often leads to the most blatant forms of human rights violations.

In recent years, large scale corruption and abuse of power by successive governments in Pakistan have placed a renewed emphasis on transparency and accountability which can only be established where there is easy access to information, not only by those in the government but by a range of actors in the private sector. Similarly, people's active involvement in the development process requires above all the provision of full and accurate

information regarding development plans, resource allocations and expenditures. With the Musharraf Government attempting to introduce a new Devolution Plan, it is all the more important that governance from the village to the central level should be accountable to the people. A Right to Information will ensure that the people can hold public bodies accountable on a regular basis without having to lay the entire burden on their elected representatives who are themselves often unable to get the information. Since most governmental works are carried out for the benefit of the people they must know exactly how things are being done. To participate in the planning and decision making process, people must have sufficient information about the nature of projects and programs to be undertaken in their areas. This will enable them to give their opinion well in time for required changes or modifications. This in turn will reduce project costs and will increase project outputs manifold.

Of late, we have seen in the Islamic Republic great misuse, misappropriation and also careless use of public funds. To counter this, it is essential that there should be complete transparency in all-public dealings. This is bound to bring about a more careful utilization and application of funds.

In Sweden the Constitutional guarantee of the right to know and the concept of open government goes back to 1766. There are few other countries whose constitutions expressly guarantee a right of access to government held information. The 1996 South African Constitution goes a step further by guaranteeing a

right of access to information held not only by the government but also by private parties and that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights.

Similarly, the Constitution of Nepal 1990 gives every citizen the right to demand and receive information on any matter of public importance, provided that nothing could compel any person to provide information on any matter about which secrecy is to be maintained by law (Article 16).

The Constitution of Pakistan, like many other Constitutions, enshrines only guarantees of free expression. The relevant provision in this regard is Article 19, which gives every citizen the right to freedom of speech and expression, and freedom of the press.

Such freedom of expression guarantees are being increasingly interpreted to include also the right to receive information. The Indian Supreme Court, for example, has held that the freedom of expression clause of the Constitution of India does oblige the Government to disclose particulars of government transactions. The interpretation of free expression clauses that do not expressly guarantee a right to access to government held information requires a high degree of judicial philosophy and activism. It is therefore becoming increasingly clear that having a specific constitutional right to know framework is imperative to effectively ensure a system of open government.

Some countries, even though without constitutional guarantees of the right to know, have adopted Freedom of Information Acts. With the passage of the Freedom of Information Acts, the burden of proof shifts from the individual to the government. Those seeking information are no

longer required to show a need for information. Instead, the "need to know" has been replaced by a "right to know" doctrine. The government now has to justify the need for security. The Freedom of Information Acts thus have set new standards for determining which records may be withheld. A Freedom of Information Bill is also about to be introduced in the Indian Lok Sabha and a similar law has already been passed by the Delhi Assembly for the Capital territory.

Given the potential impact and far reaching implications of such access to information laws, this right should no doubt be made subject to certain conditions such as respect of the rights or reputations of others; protection of national security or of public health or morals. At the same time, it must be pointed out that much of the required information does not have any bearing on, for example, national security or the reputation of others. However, it is surprising to see the extent of the use of the claim of privilege to deny disclosures in matters that do not seem to be in the least sensitive or requiring confidentiality. Requests for information from any public body are generally refused saying that it is a part of secret records or that it is confidential or that it just cannot be given. Most people continue to accept this as the truth.

While drafting the new law, list of exceptions should be kept limited and specific. The exceptions must be stated clearly, so as to not give rise to any ambiguity and thereby allowing misinterpretation and abuse. The law should also contain provisions for setting up specific systems for storing and disseminating infor-

mation and upgrading the existing systems for enabling easy access. There should be methods in which information can reach people easily such as making information of certain types available at accessible outlets such as post offices etc. Information should also be given in a simple and organized form so that it is easy to comprehend. Gazettes and publications, which are usually unavailable, are of no use to lay citizens, given the low literacy rate. The fee for getting information must also be reasonable and should not act as a deterrent for asking information and should not end up debarring information from the disadvantaged who cannot afford the fees.

The law must also lay down clearly the principles of accountability. It must state specifically as to who is responsible for providing information. Penalties should be imposed on officials who delay, without any just cause, the giving of information or refuse on unwarranted grounds. The law should also make it binding on private bodies, including NGOs, to disclose certain kinds of information, which could affect the public. It is the duty of all of us to see to it that a good law is made which gives us effective rights. We should thus all keep a watch on the proceedings leading to the adoption of this law; find out the text of the law which can sometimes be obtained through journalists and newspaper offices; make representations regarding the issue to the concerned officials and ministers; write about the issue; and most important of all, insist on our right to know in every situation where we need information.

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