

Enacting a new law on slaughter of animals

M. ABDUL LATIF MONDAL

It is learnt from newspaper reports that the government is working to enact a new law on the control of slaughter of animals and inspection of meat to replace the existing half-century-old Animals Slaughter (Restriction) and Meat Control Act, 1957 (hereinafter referred to as the existing Act). The existing Act as amended up to 1983 and extending to the whole of Bangladesh is inadequate to meet the needs of the present time and this has necessitated its replacement by the new law.

Available information reveals that the draft of the new law now under review of the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock may have, *inter alia*, the following provisions.

- Emphasis on safe and disease-free meat consumption from poultry, bull, bullock, cow, ox, buffalo, sheep and goat.
- Flexibility in terms of age restriction on the slaughter of animals.
- Three meatless days a week to protect cattle population.
- Slaughtering of animals namely bull, bullock, cow, buffalo, goat, sheep only in abattoirs.
- Setting up standards of abattoirs, effluent processing and waste management to check environmental degradation, maximum residue level in terms of pesticides or antibiotics found in meat.
- Ante-mortem and post-mortem inspections of slaughtered animals by veterinary surgeons to help determine the existence of any disease in such animals that is likely to be transmitted to human body.
- Measures to expedite meat exports.
- Creating scope for processing and use of slaughter waste such as cow dung, horns, bone and artery or veins to derive maximum economic return.

A closer look into the above provisions of the proposed law helps arrive at the following conclusions:

First, the existing Act has not put much emphasis on safe and disease-free meat from animals defined in the Act. The inclusion of provision of safe and disease-free meat and its proper implementation may ensure consumption of safe meat and meat

products in the country and remove any type of obstacles in exporting meat and meat products.

Second, the existing Act restricts the slaughter of (a) a she-goat or ewe below the age of two years or any other female animal below the age of three years; (b) a he-goat, ram or lamb of or below the age one year or any other male animal of or below the age of seven years if such animal is used or is capable of being used for draught or breeding purposes; (c) a she-goat or ewe of or below the age of five years or any other female animal of or below the age of ten years, if such animal is not unsuitable for bearing offspring and is capable of producing milk; and (d) any female animal which is pregnant or is in milk. Flexibility in terms of age restriction on the slaughter of

products in the country and remove any type of obstacles in exporting meat and meat products.

Fourth, slaughtering of animals namely bull, bullock, cow, buffalo, goat, sheep only in abattoirs is an environment friendly proposition. But this will first require development of adequate infrastructural facilities.

Fifth, now the people are at risk of consumption of meats of any type selling in the markets, as there is no provision of checking animal diseases likely to be transmitted to human body. We often come across media reports about the slaughter of diseased animals and the sale of meat of dead cows. There are also media

Meat is an important item of food. The law on the slaughter of animals and inspection of meat encompasses all strata of the society. The government may, therefore, solicit opinion of the people and the media on the draft law disclosing it to the print media before placing it in the cabinet meeting. This will set a good example of people's participation in the process of decision-making on important public issue.

those cattle that are under fattening programmes and are not suitable to provide the necessary draft power for ploughing may help increase the availability of meat.

Third, the rate of growth in the livestock sector is far from satisfactory. Available data reveal that the country's cattle population showed an annual growth rate of 0.25 percent between 1960 and 1990 while the population grew at about 3 percent annually during the same period. The recent growth rate is reported to be much lower than the annual rate of growth required to meet the increasing demand for livestock products, especially meat and milk. A Bangla daily has reported that at the moment, there is a shortfall of 123 crore 20 lakh 60 thousand tonnes of milk, 50 lakh 10 thousand tonnes of meat and 929 crore pieces of eggs in comparison with the demands (The Ittefaq, July 12, 2005). Thus, introduc-

reports about the sale of dead chickens in the hotels and restaurants. The daily Ittefaq (October, 29) has carried a detailed report on the slaughter of diseased cow, ox, buffalo, goat and sheep in the capital in unhygienic conditions. Slaughtering of animals on the roadside and other open spaces even in the capital is not uncommon. The meat of buffalo is regularly sold in the name of beef. The Daily Star (October 29) has carried a report which shows that a mobile court filed cases on October 28 against 20 unscrupulous traders for selling buffalo meat in the name of beef in different city markets. Ante-mortem and post-mortem inspections of slaughtered animals particularly in the cities and towns by veterinary surgeons are of utmost importance to ensure availability of safe meat. But there are media reports that even in the capital the veterinary surgeons appointed by the Dhaka City Corpora-

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TI must use a composite index of vices committed by all nations

DR. FAKHRUDDIN AHMED writes from Princeton

WHEN Rabindranath Thakur won the 1913 Nobel Prize for literature, he was reportedly miffed by the wild jubilation of his countrymen. The reason for Kabi Guru's annoyance was the impression given by his compatriots that since the Swedish Academy had ratified his genius, he must be one! As though without the authentication by the Nobel committee, the extent of Rabindranath's genius would be in question! So much for inferiority complex.

That there is systemic corruption in Bangladesh is beyond question. To a smaller or greater degree our politicians, businessmen, bureaucrats and even some members of the judiciary are corrupt; more corrupt than those in the US, for instance. Patriotic Bangladesh must get civically involved locally and exert enormous pressure on the government to stem the tide of corruption and religious and non-religious violence that have become all too pervasive in Bangladesh. This must be done for the sake of Bangladesh; not to please masters abroad. One has to be wary, however, of the motives of agencies such as TI, which cites Bangladesh for corruption without suggesting remedies. One can only conclude that the motives are not necessarily altruistic.

From what little statistics I know, I cannot understand how endemic intra and inter-country variables can be used to rank corruption in ethnically, politically, economically, culturally, religiously, and population-density-wise diverse nations. With morality and corruption perceived differently in different countries, even defining corruption is hazardous, let alone quantifying it. TI itself admits that its corruption index is actually a perception index. How is perception quantified? According to the perception of the failed US Supreme Court nominee Harriet Miers, President Bush is "the most brilliant man" she has ever met! Corruption in a poverty-stricken have-not nation can be understood, if not condoned; but, what is the excuse for corruption in a rich and "have" nation?

The question that needs to be asked is Transparency International is located

however, is how and why they focus on indexing certain vices and not others. The vices that foreign agencies prefer to focus on are suppression of human rights, freedom of the press, and corruption. These are serious vices, and every nation which ranks low should take notice and must act to reverse it. Two things are important to remember about the vices that are routinely surveyed: the nations named near the bottom are invariably poor nations; and the vices named harm the citizens of the nations named, not foreigners. Why not tabulate vices committed by western

in Berlin, they should have no difficulty coming up with an "Exploitation of Foreign Workers Index," where I have a feeling that Germany will rank very high; perhaps higher than Bangladesh?

How about an "Illegal Invasion of Sovereign Nations Without UN Mandate Index"? The US and Britain, backed by most European and western nations illegally invaded and occupied Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) without the authorisation of the UN Security Council. The last time I checked, Bangladesh had not invaded a foreign country. Surely, in

tortured foreign prisoners? Surely, western nations, especially the US and the UK would rank very high on the torture index, perhaps higher than "poor and corrupt" nations?

There must be a "Violator of UN Security Council Resolution Index." Israel has distinguished itself as the number one violator of UN Security Council resolutions. Yet, its crimes have gone unpunished. After declaring the UN irrelevant and invading Afghanistan and Iraq bypassing the UN, President Bush is now pressuring UN Security Council to enact sanctions against Syria and Iran! I am not

TI admits that its corruption index is a composite of several corruption-related indices. Why not construct a composite index of the major vices every nation commits, and rank nations according to how they terrorise and brutalise other nations? TI must include

indices that measure aggression against and invasion of foreign nations, killing civilians of foreign nations through invasion and aerial bombing, torturing and killing foreign prisoners, occupying someone else's land, flouting UN Security Council resolutions, exploiting the foreign labourers working in one's country and preventing people belonging to minority religions from wearing their religious symbols. TI must apply

the same rigorous "scientific" methods to this composite index as it does to construct the corruption index. I have a

feeling that in this overall "composite" index of real human rights violations, the roles will be reversed -- the rich and

western nations will top the list of major offenders and the poorer nations will

bring up the rear.

So, Transparency International:

neither the rich nor the poor nations have a monopoly on virtues or vices. Vices abound. It depends on what vices one chooses to focus on. Bangladesh and other poor nations face monumental tasks in ridding themselves of societal ills. However,

Transparency International or the rich donor nations which finance it, have not earned the right to pontificate to poor nations.

Why not an "Occupation of Foreign Lands Index"? In spite of the UN Security Council resolutions asking it to end occupation, Israel has been occupying the West Bank since 1967 and brutalising the Palestinian civilians.

Bangladesh is not occupying foreign lands, although by refusing to cede an equal slice of land to Bangladesh in exchange for Bangladeshi enclaves of Dhaogram and Angarpota as per Mujib-Indira pact, India is. In this

category of stealing someone else's

land, Israel and India would rank very high, wouldn't they?

There should also be an "Intolerance for Minority Religious Symbols Index." Next door from Transparency International, in France, Muslim women are forbidden to wear their religious symbol, the headscarf or the "hijab," in government buildings. We are talking about women here! I am

not aware of any religious group being prevented from wearing their religious symbol in Bangladesh. Although

LETTER FROM AMERICA

Neither the rich nor the poor nations have a monopoly on virtues or vices. Vices abound. It depends on what vices one chooses to focus on. Bangladesh and other poor nations face monumental tasks in ridding themselves of societal ills. However, Transparency International or the rich donor nations which finance it, have not earned the right to pontificate to poor nations.

that harm citizens of the poor, helpless nations?

Since the western and the rich nations come out smelling like roses in the surveys they carry out, logic forces one to conclude that they are better protectors of human rights, have more freedom of the press, are less corrupt, have fewer vices, and are better human beings. Are they? What about the massive lies by the Bush administration that preceded the invasion and destruction of Iraq; prisoner torture and prisoner homicides in Abu Ghraib; the imprisonment of The New York Times reporter Judith Miller for 85 days for the crime of not divulging her source, which turned out to be the recently indicted Scooter Libby, Vice President Dick Cheney's Chief of Staff?

After taking our hats off to the western and the rich nations for their humanity, freedom, and incorruption, let us play the devil's advocate and change the categories. Let us start with Berlin and Germany. For the last fifty years, millions of Turkish "guest workers" have toiled to rebuild Germany after WWII, without being granted German citizenship! Since Transparency International is located

this international outlaw index, the western nations would rank very high, higher perhaps than Bangladesh?

What about a "Killing Foreign Nationals Index"? According to western estimates, because of the US-British led invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, hundreds of thousands of Afghan and Iraqi civilians have been killed. American involvement in Vietnam resulted in the death of two million Vietnamese, and American nuclear bombs killed and maimed hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians. I am not aware of Bangladeshis going into another country and killing its citizens. Once again, the western nations would rank very high on this killing-people-of-other-nationalities index through invasion and aerial bombing; perhaps higher than the poor nations?

There has to be a "Torturing Foreign Nationals Index." The torturing and homicides of prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison, Guantanamo Bay, and outsourcing of prisoners for torture abroad under the aegis of the Bush administration are well documented. The British, too, have tortured Iraqi prisoners. Yet, no torture index exists! When was the last time Bangladesh

aware of Bangladesh ever violating a single UN Security Council resolution? Western nations, US and Israel would rank very high on this UN-violator index, perhaps higher than "uncivilized" poor nations?

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Rezaul Karim : A tribute

ENAM A CHAUDHURY

THE cruel hand of destiny has removed Ambassador Rezaul Karim from the world's stage, in a most unexpected manner, at an unanticipated time, in a place far away from his home and hearth. The ever-smiling Rezaul Karim breathed his last in distant Cairo on October 29 while watching TV, only about two months after he had left Bangladesh to join as the country's Ambassador to Egypt. It was a serene afternoon, on the banks of the Nile, in a well-appointed Ambassadorial apartment which Salma, his accomplished wife of nearly forty-five years, had just organised with her loving husband, to be good enough, in their high standard of sophistication, to welcome the hordes of friends and guests that they had been expecting to visit them in the cool months ahead. Fate ordained otherwise.

Seventh, the existing law prescribes punishment that may extend to six months' imprisonment or fine of Tk 1000 or both for contravening any of its provisions. Considering the importance of animal meat and meat products in human health, the fine of Tk 1000 may be increased to act as a deterrent to violate the law.

Last but not the least, the existing Act extends to the whole of Bangladesh. The exception is that nothing in the Act applies to animals slaughtered or to be slaughtered on the day of Id-ul-Zoha and Id-ul-Fitr and the two days succeeding each of those festivals. So will the proposed law. The question arises as to how the law will work in the rural areas including the growth centres that constitute more than 80 percent of the country in the absence of facilities like abattoirs and necessary manpower such as veterinary inspectors. Along with the creation of the necessary infrastructure, vigorous campaign should be launched to create awareness among the people about the hazardous effects of slaughtering animals outside the designated places on environment in general and human health in particular.

To conclude, meat is an important item of food. The law on the slaughter of animals and inspection of meat encompasses all strata of the society. The government may, therefore, solicit opinion of the people and the media on the draft law disclosing it to the print media before placing it in the cabinet meeting. This will set a good example of people's participation in the process of decision-making on important public issue.

dressed handsome young gentleman.

In our career pattern, we initially took different lines and didn't meet very often, though I kept on hearing about him from all my three diplomat brothers, who always spoke very highly of the qualities of his head and heart. Masum and Iftekhar were close to him, and Faruq Chowdhury, in spite of belonging to a different political persuasion, continued to remain his life-long pal, joined by inseparable bonds of warm friendship.

This was the beauty of Rezaul Karim's character. He was accommo-

dated recipient of this honour, I was, as a matter of fact, drafting a letter to him on this occasion when I got the news of his sudden death.

He was a principled person, not given to usual prevalent practice of floating along the tide for the sake of obtaining benefits or accommodation. He kept on addressing Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as "Bangabandhu," and never hesitated to convey his respect and admiration for the person he once proudly welcomed as the first Mission Chief in London on January 10, 1972. He continued to do so even as an

Yes, warm but not over-flowing.

Karim knew exactly what he was doing. As an Ambassador of a member country, he was welcoming a high powered UN-delegation. Appropriateness was a consideration he never sacrificed. His successful role as the Chairman of the Organising Committee of last year's International Film Festival in Dhaka was widely appreciated and acclaimed.

A prolific columnist and author of many books, Rezaul Karim maintained effective interest in so many areas, only God knows, how. He was a keen social worker, an eminent Rotarian and participated in many activities connected with mitigation of poverty and spread of education. Culturally conscious, he never failed to engage himself in relevant pursuits. A linguist, he was looking forward to brushing up his Arabic while in Cairo. He was President of the Commonwealth Association of Bangladesh. Only about a week before his departure from Dhaka he chaired a long meeting at Hotel da Vinci to revise and finally adopt the Constitution of the Association. The farewell dinner organised by the Association to bid him good-bye was attended by many leaders from all sides of the political divide and by several Ambassadors. It was a rare happening in Dhaka, and everyone spoke so well of him. He as such was a great unifying force.

Mr. Rezaul Karim experienced a few tragedies in recent years in his personal life. Otherwise also, he had various reason to feel deprived and shocked. Yet he never felt lost, disheartened or frustrated. Suave as he was, he maintained his composure all through, and his indomitable will and fortitude, under all circumstances, kept up glowing the light of hope and optimism.

And I recall his ever-pleasant countenance in the golf-course. He was consistent and considerate, and a failed shot never led him to seek an excuse or to lose his temper. "In little proportions we just beauties see," and indeed, in the humdrum of everyday life one could see the real Rezaul Karim, resplendent with the charms and refinements of his character.

Our society, our politics, our intellectual arena will be much poorer without him. But Rezaul Bhai, all those who have had the privilege of knowing you would fondly cherish your memory all their lives.

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Ambassador Rezaul Karim and Begum Salma Karim.

Adviser to the Chairperson of BNP, only to prove that qualities of tolerance and goodwill need not really be sacrificed at the alter of short-sighted ill-conceived self-interest and narrow parochialism.

Rezaul Karim was a person with great zest for life -- *joie d' vivre* -- a man with a passion for seeking pleasure and perfection in the diverse avenues that he trod on. He had a wealth of experience, and many more, contributed to the making of MM Rezaul Karim as a very successful diplomat. He had Ambassadorial assignments in six or seven countries, as divergent as USA and China, Russia and Sri Lanka, Iraq and Iran. And everywhere his performance was superb. He established our first diplomatic mission in Saudi Arabia and UK. Only recently, five days before his death, the government of Russian Federation conferred on him Insignia of Honour as a mark of recognition of his contribution to the strengthening of the bilateral relations. As I was

days and brought Mrs. Parks, Dr. King, and their cause to the attention of the world. A Supreme Court decision struck down the Montgomery ordinance under which Mrs. Parks had been fined, and outlawed racial segregation on public transportation.

However,

she did not organise the boycott. The night of Parks' arrest, Jo Ann Robinson, an English professor at all-black Alabama State College and leader of the local Women's Political Council, stayed up until dawn writing and secretly mimeographing 35,000 leaflets calling for a one-day bus boycott the following Monday. She and her students distributed them clandestinely

throughout