



## RIGHTS corner

## RIGHT TO INFORMATION

# Good governance and the village broadcasting system

AHM BAZLUR RAHMAN

**G**OOD governance is the most conversant among the development issues that being discussed in Bangladesh now. Not only the government departments, all the non-government lobbies also are being prepared to face out the challenges of development in the 21st century. Broadcasting, free flowing and exchanging of information is very important in establishing good governance because in a closed and hidden environment no transparency, accountability and or participation is possible. Hence village broadcasting can play a great role to ensure good governance.

## Existing broadcasting system and people in rural area

In the existing broadcasting system there are some government patronized institutions like Bangladesh Television (BTV) and Radio Bangladesh and on the other hand, Channel I, ATN Bangla, NTV Radio Metroviva, VOA and BBC FM that are patronized by non-government bodies. If we assess the broadcast programs we may realize how these programs satisfy the demands or desires of the rural people. The level of choice and the level of feedback are very important factor in relation to the access of rural people in information. Unfortunately the media monitoring system in our country is very poor. There is no statistical information about the participation of the rural people in media. The rural people are virtually looked over from the sector of production, decision-making and planning level in the name of participation. It is to say that, a decentralized broadcasting management is necessary to ensure the participation of the entire rural population in the central broadcasting. Because so nearer to the rural people the broadcasting media would be established so much access and participation would be ensured. For an example, the Government of Sri Lanka has established successfully an entire rural participation and access in Kothmale and Mohavelly. People are making both programs and decisions in full-fledged there. The central broadcasting authority hardly interferes them except only the central news broadcasting.



The villagers are having the necessary information about agricultural management, current and new technologies, insect controlling management in agriculture, diseases and market prices through the radio there.

Due to the lack of central broadcasting system, the contents of the programs can not satisfy the daily needs of the villagers in our country. We should go for the village broadcasting system as soon as possible by assessing what impacts of the programs are there on the villagers for whom these are produced in the finance some vested interest people.

Now we may discuss on how print media influences the village livelihood. The strength of the print media in our country is that they are now able to publish news in free and independent environment. But the weakness is that the literacy of the population is only 40.3 now, as a result the 60 percent of the population are not able to

participate in this media. Besides, due to the developed technology a great deal of changes comes to the printing media day by day but along with this the price of the newspapers is increasing, therefore, it is difficult for the villagers to buy it. As the result, it fails to make an appeal to the extensive illiterate people of villages. Besides, while the owners of the newspapers are not in the same class and moreover due to the economic interest they are not ready to fix the price within the effort of the rural population though it is possible. What impact comes by the central broadcasting system or the print media may a matter of research but it is clear that in view of present days these media are not capable of playing an effective role.

Villagers can not read newspapers due to the illiteracy and besides, literate villagers can not read newspapers due to the high price, therefore, village broadcasting especially Radio and TV can influence the illiterate

people very much effectively. But due to the centralized broadcasting system people are deprived of that opportunity. Community radio and television can strengthen village broadcasting and it indicates an open and free flowing of information in the free and independent society, which is very important for establishing good governance. The central broadcasting system is government or individual ownership centered and the impact and control of these deprives people especially the illiterates from the information about the ill deeds of the government and the national or international profit seekers.

Village Broadcasting is recent in our country. Generally it runs for people's interest as it is corresponded by the people come from various professions and classes. Here are some recommendations for the village broadcasting system:

1. To establish broadcasting centers at the rural level by the government initiative. It would be village radio or village television so that peoples around 30-50 miles may enjoy the broadcast programs.

2. To make opportunity to promote community radio and television at the rural level by non-government initiative.

3. To compose village broadcasting guideline but it would not be profit making. Community broadcasting would be facilitated on the basis of neither profit making nor losing concern.

At the end we want to say that, good governance actually indicates the environment in which people may have all the information continuously from the government or non-government sources. Good governance and transparency is in the same way where no expenditure needs for per hour. The quick implementation of the two is possible only in the political will wishing. In the village broadcasting system community radio and television may facilitate the government regarding non-government information to the people regularly as well as the people may express their opinion and point of view through it.

Therefore, the village broadcasting may play the effective role to ensure this both way information flowing by which it will support to achieve the good governance, desired economic, social and political concerns.

Source: BNNRC

## Star LAW analysis

# Economic development and rule of law not the answer to gender equality: Japanese experience

SHARMINA NASRIN

**W**OMEN have historically been denied of their fundamental human rights and dignity in almost every society. Even in the 21st century, large scale inequality prevails against women who are poorly represented in public role, professionally marginalized or virtually missing in many spheres of the society and state as a result of this discrimination and denial of rights. Restoring equality between women and men, therefore, remains a major human rights challenge as well as a development concern in both national and global agenda.

It is commonly believed that economic empowerment and stringent legal instruments have important role to play in combating social inequalities and disparities.

growth or enjoy good law and order, represent poor performance in gender equality.

A society is developed not only when it is economically developed or have strict rule of law, it must be an equal society as well. An equal society is one in which the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals are not determined by the factor of one's social identity -- sexual, racial, ethnic, religious or of any other kind. Due to women's reproductive and maternity role traditionally people take it for granted that domestic sphere is women's domain and public realm is a man's world. This traditional gender role put women inferior to men and denied their right to equal participation in professional life by reason of their womanhood. A developed economy or lawful society can secure a healthy, safe and better living for its entire citizens on equal basis, but it might

percent Japanese women advance to high school while around 50 percent of them advance to higher education at university or junior college level. Japan's high economic development has been successful to ensure equal health care, education, employment and basic financial support for all.

With regard to legal status, it has made significant strides in the advancement of equality between men and women. Japanese Constitution recognizes equal rights and status for all of its people including women. Japanese women enjoy equal inheritance and matrimonial property rights under the Civil Code, right to free choice of spouse and child custody, equal employment opportunities and wages under labour law. Women are acknowledged equal status in almost every sector under the current Japanese law. The state of law enforcement is very strong in Japan making the prospect of law implementation regarding gender equality pretty well.

Based on these statistical facts, Japan seems to be an equal society with little discrimination between men and women. However, the case is not necessarily what the economic and legal status represents on the surface. If we look at the pattern of role, relationship and actual participation of men and women at family, society and public life, it reveals a different picture of gender equality. "Japan is still a developing country in terms of gender equality," said Mariko Bando, a former Japanese higher civil servant. It becomes evident from its rank at 42nd among 75 countries in the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) of UNDP Human Development Report 2006 which shows the extent of women participation in political, economic and professional activities.

## Role of men and women at work: 'office flower' and 'corporate warrior'

Despite the fact that female participation in labour force has been increasing sharply over the last few decades, Japanese business world as well as government sector is still male-dominated and gender biased. Employment practices in Japan clearly presents two distinct career paths for men and women making one the 'office warrior' while the other 'office flower'. While men are assigned with upper level decision making management positions, vast majority of female are generally employed at low profile clerical work and menial tasks. Although Japanese women aspire for promising career and remain fairly qualified with higher academic credentials as well as personal qualities, they basically perform the decorative role at work and experience slower rate of advancement.

Japanese Equal Employment Opportunity Law categorically prohibits any discriminatory practices against women in recruitment, assignment, bene-

fits and promotion. But still very few women occupy higher managerial, administrative and political positions. According to Japanese government reports, the proportion of women in the national parliament accounts for about 9 percent membership in 2005. Although a total of 20 percent national civil servants are female, the proportion of female occupying senior executive positions remains noticeably as low as 1.7 percent. While 41 percent of Japanese women work, they hold only about 9 percent of managerial positions, compared with about 45 percent in the United States.

Apart from women's engagement in low profile, ornamental role at work, their labour force participation represents a distinct feature of disrupted working career. Around 70 per cent working women are reported to quit from workforce once they marry and have children after spending few years at work.

## Sources of inequality: attitudinal challenge

One of the central reasons for this under-representation of women in higher level executive positions is attributed to the Japanese traditional social attitude towards women.

Traditionally Japan was a 'male-run', 'male-first' society which preferred women to be 'good wife-wise mother', while men to be 'stronger, wiser and more important than women'. Marriage and motherhood were considered the only source of fulfillment for women. Men had no family responsibility other than providing financial support. On the other hand, social attitude towards women's abilities to run public activities was also very negative. They were believed to possess poor managerial capacities with no leadership qualities. Therefore, women were hired to work only in short term clerical job or tea serving while career positions were reserved for men.

Even today employment situation in modern Japan is not free from the traditional gender role stereotypes despite government's sincere legal and policy supports. In a public opinion poll on a gender-equal society conducted by Cabinet Office in 2004, about 45 percent of Japanese people expressed to believe that husband should be the breadwinner and wife should stay at home. In another survey on social lifestyle it is found that Japanese men, who are branded as 'corporate warrior' for their dogged loyalty and devotion to work, spend very little time on housework and child caring regardless of whether their wives work or not. House work and child rearing are still regarded as the most appropriate tasks for women.

Since husbands don't pay sufficient attention to their home affairs, working wives have to shoulder double responsibilities at home and at work, and obviously for that reason most women fail to exhibit

considerable degree of competence or seriousness at work. As a result men are naturally preferred than women at managerial work who work hard at the cost of their individual freedom and family life. Japanese managers hardly seem to be sensitive to the urgent needs of a female worker. There happen worse cases of women being illegally dismissed or excluded from important projects by their employers due to taking leave for pregnancy or looking after sick child. Since marital responsibility negatively impacts on women's career and employment status, many Japanese women nowadays seem to stay unmarried or don't want to take child.

These facts signify that although Japan is a highly developed country in terms of economic prosperity and legal development, women are still struggling with the traditional attitude to get their appropriate role and equal participation. Opportunities for participation and sharing of responsibilities both at family and public affairs are two important aspects of gender equality. In his 'More than 100 Million Women are Missing' Dr. Amartya Sen observed that our society is characterized by deeply embedded different kinds of gender inequalities including 'professional inequality' with lack of opportunities in employment and promotion at work.

From Japanese experience it appears that removing social inequalities with regard to gender is not merely a function of economic or legal initiatives. Gender equality law or policy support is important to provide the basis for claiming a right. But for proper application of the law popular participation is an essential precondition to set change in practice. People would voluntarily respect the law only when their traditional mindset is spontaneously motivated to recognize the necessity of the change. Since women's rights-based values seem to challenge the long-standing religious or social customary practices, much of resistance to the equality principle comes from popular attitude conditioned by traditional values. Large scale development or strict law can do little unless and until this biased attitude is changed through social awareness that women are not only women, they are human beings and so they have equal right and entitlement to professional participation. Along with law or economic empowerment, there must be equality of rights based social mobilization initiatives including awareness campaign, inclusion of gender equality issue into the education curriculum, extensive gender training at workplace and educational institutes etc. If the sources of challenge for women's rights are not properly addressed, neither law nor the economic development can effectively eliminate gender inequalities.

Sharmina Nasrin, government official currently studying Masters of Public Administration (MPA) in the Niigata University, Japan.

## EC unveils new list of constituencies

The Election Commission (EC) unveiled the new district-wise list of constituencies with 18 districts seeing either an increase or a decrease in the number of seats representing them in parliament. According to the list, Dhaka has now 20 electoral areas, up from 13. The new seven seats would be earmarked for the metropolitan areas considering the high density of population. The number of seats in Dhaka division, however, has risen by only four to 94 from 90 as four districts--Faridpur, Kishoreganj, Manikganj and Munshiganj--each lost a constituency. Chittagong, Barisal and Khulna divisions--all have seen a decrease in the number of their constituencies. Chittagong has been allocated 58 seats against its previous 59, Barisal 21 against 23 and Khulna has got 34 against its previous 37 seats. The number of parliamentary slots in Sylhet (19 seats) and Rajshahi divisions (72 seats) remain unchanged. Sirajganj under Rajshahi division lost a seat to Rajshahi City Corporation area. Two constituencies--one lying between Mymensingh and Netrakona and the other between Pirojpur and Barisal--have been deleted from the parliamentary map. The EC has reallocated seats for the districts in line with the criteria set out in the delimitation ordinance. Besides making sure the administrative units remain intact, it considered density of population and administrative convenience in the reallocation. -The Daily Star, January 15.

## Court orders trial of Hasina, Rehana, Selim

A Dhaka court framed charges against former premier Sheikh Hasina, her sister Sheikh Rehana and cousin Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim in a Tk 2.99 crore extortion case. It also decided that trial of the case filed by businessman Azam J Chowdhury would begin very shortly. This is the first time charges have been framed against a former prime minister. Hasina, also president of Awami League (AL), however, protested her innocence and termed the case false and motivated. Of the three, Hasina and former health minister Selim are detained while Rehana, who lives in London, was indicted in absentia. Meeting her lawyers after the proceedings, Hasina demanded a national election by March-April. Earlier, standing in the dock, she said, "False cases were filed against me after I had refused to strike a deal with the government. Another reason was I never want a military dictator to assume power and become the country's president." Addressing Judge Azizul Huq of Dhaka Metropolitan Session Judge's Court, she said she knows he is helpless as "he has to follow dictates from some special places". Hasina made the comments when the judge asked her and Selim to say if they were guilty or not. -The Daily Star, January 14.

## Mirpur sizzles in death rumour

### RMG workers clash with cops

Several thousand garment workers in the capital's Mirpur area clashed with police intermittently leaving at least 30 people injured and traffic obstructed for hours. Demonstrations for pay rise, medical facilities and immediate payment of arrears paralysed life and trade in the city's garment industry hub for the second consecutive day. Over 350 factories across Mirpur-10, Mirpur-13, Mirpur-14, Pallabi, Sheorapara, Kazi Para and adjacent areas remained closed fearing attacks by the workers. The same day, at least 20 more people were wounded in a fight between workers and police at Dhaka Export Processing Zone (DEPZ) in Savar. Hundreds of workers protesting sudden closure of a garment factory there barricaded Kaliakoir-Nabinagar road for over an hour in the morning. Police filed six cases with Kafrul Police Station in connection with the workers' unrest in the capital. Of the cases, four were for violation of the emergency power rules and one for assault on the law enforcers. -The Daily Star, January 16.

## Necessity of emergency lessened

Newly appointed Law Adviser Hassan Arif said the necessity for the state of emergency has lessened and that the regime would not be needed at all if normalcy prevails in the country. "The state of emergency was essential following the incidents preceding 1/11... Now its necessity is diminishing. We'll have to see whether normal condition prevails. If it does, emergency is not required," he told reporters at his ministry. Asked about transparency in former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's trial, Arif, who is a former attorney general, said it is not true that transparency is ensured if a large number of people throng the court on trucks. And, he said, it is also equally not true that the presence of a few people would guarantee transparency. The law adviser said it is important to ensure whether the victim has faith in the trial proceedings and if the trial is fair. About detention of political leaders without specific cases, he said the detention should be deemed illegal if a higher court declares it so, adding that in every democracy there is such detention. "But it must be ensured that it is not misused," he said. -Unb, Dhaka, January 16.

## HC asks govt not to remand Tarique

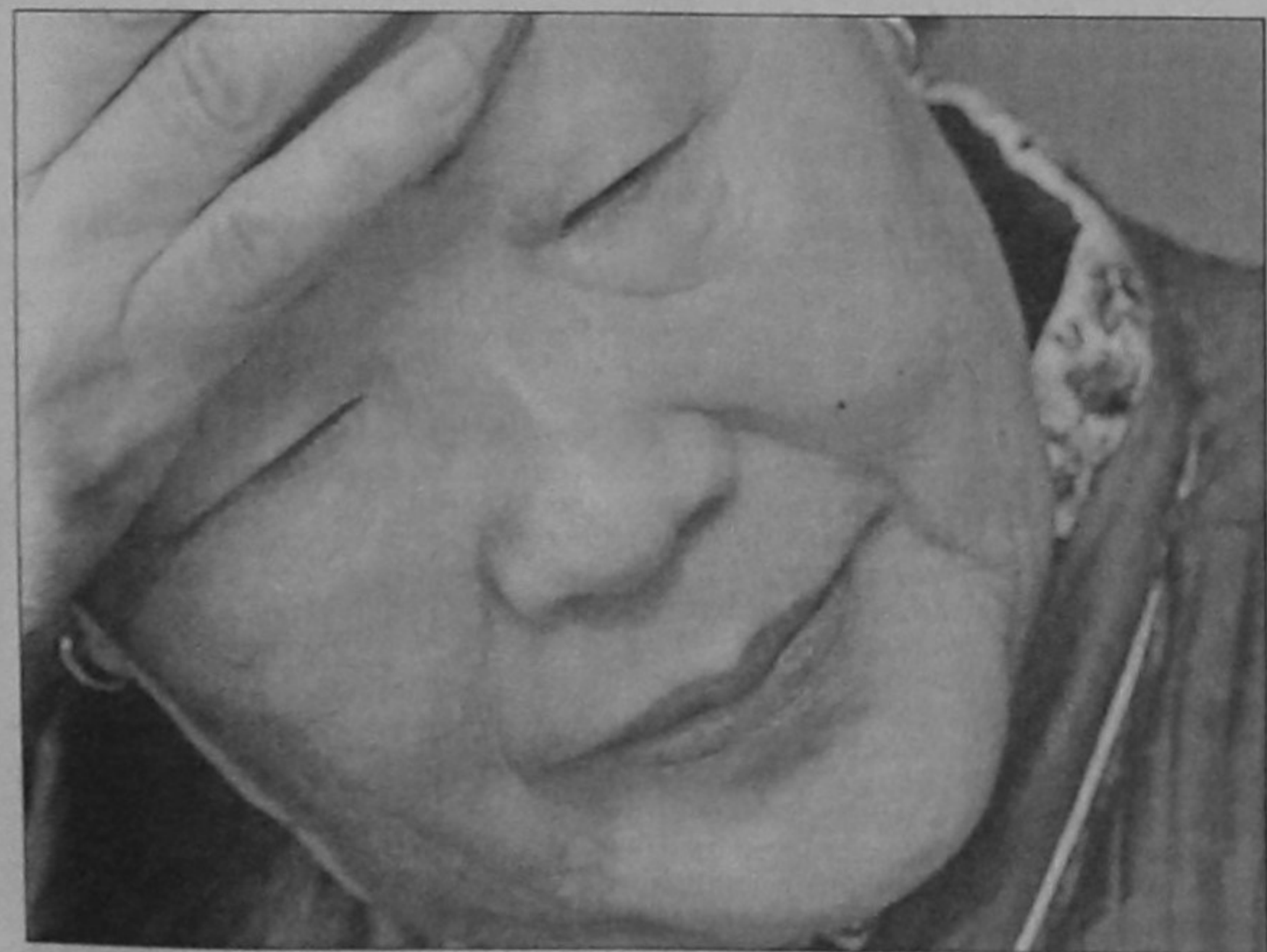
The High Court (HC) directed the government not to take former premier Khaleda Zia's son Tarique Rahman on police remand and quiz him instead at jail gate if it is necessary for investigation. The HC gave the decision after hearing Tarique's petition against placing him on a one-day remand. Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Ehsanul Haque had ordered on January 9 in a Tk 1.32 crore extortion case. Opposing Tarique's petition, the state counsel told the court that it was necessary to take Tarique on remand for the sake of the investigation and that the investigation would be hampered if he cannot be taken on remand. Tarique's counsels argued that he is ill and had been tortured during the earlier police remand. Tarique, also senior joint secretary of BNP, was once interrogated at jail gate, the counsels told the court, arguing that he may be interrogated at jail gate again if it is necessary. Meanwhile, the jail authorities yesterday took Tarique to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BMMU) and Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for some pathological tests. Deputy Inspector General (prison) Major Shamsul Haider Siddiqui told The Daily Star that Tarique has been complaining about headache and pain in the neck. -The Daily Star, January 16.

## IGP suggests raising fine for violating traffic rules

The inspector general of police (IGP) suggested heavy financial penalties for violating traffic rules in a bid to prevent drivers from committing traffic offences repeatedly. "At present, the rule breakers are fined as low as Tk 50 and so, they don't bother committing the offences again. But if the fine is increased to Tk 1000, they [rule breakers] will think twice before violating the traffic rules," IGP Nur Mohammad said. The police boss also observed that the nagging problem of traffic jam in the capital is not possible to fix within a short time and suggested adopting several short and long-term strategies to get rid of the menace. He made the observations while addressing a monthly luncheon meeting of American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh (Amcham) at a city hotel as the chief guest and speaker. Amcham President Syed Ershad Ahmed, Vice President Trevor MacDonald and Executive Director A Gafur addressed the meeting. The topic was 'Traffic jam in Dhaka city: Challenges and possible solution.' When a participant observed that the truck and bus drivers dare to violate traffic rules as the sergeants take bribes from them, the IGP said that the tendency is going down adding that the previous corrupt recruitment process is responsible for it. -The Daily Star, January 16.

## Corresponding with the Law Desk

Please send your mails, queries, and opinions to: Law Desk, The Daily Star 19 Karwan Bazar, Dhaka-1215; telephone 8124944, 8124955; fax 8125155; email dslawdesk@yahoo.co.uk, lawdesk@thedailystar.net



Economic solvency is vital to ensure basic necessities and opportunities for every citizen including men and women, while legal rules facilitate institutional capacity to enforce equal rights through appropriate measures. In this respect, developed countries, which have achieved high economic growth as well as well-enforced rule of law, are supposed to be in a better position to guarantee equal enjoyment of rights and opportunities for their citizen. However, there is world wide evidence that the concept of equality and economic development and law enforcement may not always go hand in hand. As far as the Human Development Index (HDI) or Gender Empowerment Measures (GEM) of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is concerned, many developed societies who rank amongst the top in higher GDP

produce limited or little impact upon the popular attitude to get it free from long standing social stereo types prevailing against women. Japan presents a glaring example of this case of gender inequality vis-a-vis legal and economic development.

## Dual status of Japan: economic and legal development vs gender equality

Japan is a developed country which achieved high level economic growth as well as human development for its citizen. It is the second largest global economic power with a GNI per capita of about \$29,000. According to the UNDP Human Development Report 2006, Japan ranks 7th out of 177 countries. The average life expectancy for Japanese female was 85 years against 78 years for male in 2005. About 97