

## Liberate the potentials of human security

We cannot let human insecurity to get the better of peace and prosperity. So we should involve ourselves in mental gymnastics to find out how we can map measures to guard against threats arising from human insecurity.

Z.A. KHAN

INCREASING concern about the downhill slide of human security is very much discernable in the current context of insularity that has engulfed the best part of the world. As we ready ourselves to observe Human Rights Day (December 10) one regrets that the human security situation is yet to show syndromes of recovery from the trend that has set in since early this century. The right to protection of life and liberty focuses on the necessity of human security, which is in jeopardy because of the spurt of religious and ethnic extremism. The hegemonistic stance of the big powers for economic domination cannot be taken as a peripheral issue.

Human security entails taking of preventive measures to reduce vulnerability and minimise risk, and taking remedial action where prevention fails. Human security is about protection and is not simply synonymous with humanitarian aid. Human security asserts that security of

the state is not an end in itself, rather it is a means of ensuring security for its people. In fact, human security highlights the need to address the root causes of the insecurity and to ensure people's future safety.

In essence, human security means safety for people from both violent and non-violent threats and, therefore, should evoke everybody's interest to play a role, regardless of caste, creed and culture, so that we can make our world an abode where safety and harmony rule the roost.

We know that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) includes rights to life, to nationality, to own property, to education, to social security, to liberty, to a standard of living adequate for health and well being. UDHR also enshrines in it the right to recognition as a person before the law and to equal protection under the law.

Studies conducted so far reveal gross violation of right to life due to introduction of human bombers and retaliatory military measures. Damage to resources and properties due to natural calamities and armed conflict induces internal and cross-border

displacement. These strain a nation's economy hugely and add to the misfortune of the people who are struggling to survive.

When states are externally aggressive, internally repressive and too weak to govern effectively, they threaten human security. So it is imperative for states to ensure good governance, a cardinal requirement to ensure security, which can be achieved through ensuring justice and fair-play. The political system practiced in a country has reckonable bearing on human security.

Democracy, free from the control of a few oligarchs, can give fillip to the rise of friendly leadership, which is essential to accommodate the needed flexibility that sustains security initiatives. It is said that the central strategy for promotion of human security is building of an effective democratic state that values its own people and protects minority. These factors should be considered essential to ensure legitimacy and stability of a country.

Security of states and maintenance of peace are constructed on the foundation of the people who are secure. Today, diabolical extensions of security stakes have led nations to conclude that no single nation can address this intrinsic problem in isolation. The following measures could be considered to address the security threats:

- Protection from crime;
- Respect for human rights;
- Equitable access to justice;
- Protection from all kinds of violence;
- Respect for political rights;
- Restrained use of state apparatus against opponents;
- Promotion of right to information; and
- Safety from state sponsored extra judicial killing.

Under-development is considered to be one of the stifling laybacks to development of human security. It constrains the process of policy formulation of the government. It is said that human security offers a new angle of vision and a broad template for formulating policies pertaining to safety of the citizens from poverty, health hazards, natural calamity induced casualties of men and materials, and wheeling-dealing of antisocial and political cadres with impunity.

Another hair rising development being noticed these days is the declining regard for women, children and sick people during armed conflict or even during peacetime use of bombs and explosives. In my understanding there should be more targeted focus on the following issues to find ways to arrest:

- Unchecked proliferation of small arms;
- Growing criminality due to drug abuse and gun running;
- Easy accessibility to drugs by children

and jobless people who fall easy prey to cajoling by drug barons who search for peddlers;

• Protection of women, children, old and sick people during armed conflict. We cannot let human insecurity get the better of peace and prosperity. So we should involve ourselves in mental gymnastics to find out how we can map measures to guard against threats arising from human insecurity. Human development can probably be an important strategy for furthering human security. This can be achieved by:

- Addressing inequalities, which are often the root cause of violent conflict and betrayal of social stability;
  - Strengthening governance structures;
  - Providing humanitarian assistance;
  - Promoting healthy and fair politics based on freedom of choice, right to information, accountability and transparency.
- Researchers and stakeholders are of the view that human security can be enhanced provided there is committed political will, which is sure to receive overwhelming support of the majority of the citizens. According to researchers some of the fundamental strategies towards this end could be:
- Strengthening of legal norms;
  - Building of capacity to enforce justice;
  - Restricting illegal trafficking of small

- arms;
- Banning recruitment of children as soldiers;
- Prohibiting exploitative child abuse;
- Providing greater protection for internally displaced people;
- Ensuring applicability of the legal standards to non-state actors and to violence below the threshold of armed conflict;
- Ensuring democratic governance.

Development highlights the positive dimension of the concept that absence of guarantee of human security constitutes a powerful barrier to human development, and that its presence will provide opportunity to liberate the potential for growth. Building institutional capacity without strengthening respect for norms would undermine a human centered standard of security.

Strengthening norms without building the capacity to protect them will only invite disillusionment with the possibility of constraining power by the rules of law. The power of humanity to protect human dignity and security would stem only from the realisation of the need for living in an environment of amity, which is the sum total of patience, tolerance and an immense urge for sharing sensitivities, values, norms and standard sociopolitical dynamics.

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## The why of observing Human Rights Day

He can find the meaning of life if he can meaningfully relate to other members in the society with love, sanctity of life and justice. This is where we must find the basis of human rights. But we are far away from where we ought to be.

MARTIN ADHIKARY

THREE score years ago, the UN had marked December 10 as Human Rights Day. All over the world nations will observe this day with numberless activities around the lofty slogan "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." Sixty years have passed by since the Declaration of Human Rights.

Let me begin with the theme of Man trying to find the answer to the question "What is Man?" Every piece of literary work, every work in human cultures and civilisations in all times and climes is a running commentary or answer to this question. "Man is the crown of creation," we say. Man is the Creator's representative. His vice-regent to His creation as he has the attributes that no other creature has.

Long ago a Greek philosopher defined man as "a two-legged creature without wings!" According to Islam, he is "Ashraf ul

maqlukath." According to the Bible, "Man is God's image-bearer," meaning that God has given man the moral attributes of love, holiness, justice. Man is an animal who has the culture or habit of asking questions about his own self, his own actions. He has a body, a mind, soul and a spirit. He can find the meaning of life if he can meaningfully relate to other members in the society with love, sanctity of life and justice. This is where we must find the basis of human rights. But we are far away from where we ought to be.

There are gross violations of human rights everywhere and in every nation and society. This is part and parcel of human society, a hard reality. According to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, "Discrimination lies at the root of many of the world's most pressing human rights problems. No country is immune from this scourge. Eliminating discrimination is a duty of the highest order."

We need to identify key actors or factors

that lie behind the violation of human rights in any society. Lack of awareness among the people on human rights is another area. There is no alternative to this. Awareness is the basis for all other activities with regard to democracy and human rights. So many injustices take place against innocent and helpless people because of lack of awareness among them in this area. They cannot enjoy their democratic and human rights and develop their human potential. The dynamism, pro-activity and synergy for authentic growth and development are stunted.

Any pro-people government's priority ought to be to ensure that the poor and marginalised people receive enough education and awareness in this. Mass education and awareness must be the program of governments and NGOs on every aspect of human rights so that there is enough vigilance on the part of every community member. "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." A culture of vigilance needs to be developed to make sure that people enjoy their rights and also contribute to the enjoyment of the same by others. Rights imply duties.

The promotion and protection of human rights and the rights of children of the people with disabilities must be given priority by the government and the NGOs.



Man is meant to live in peace and harmony.

The government on its own is not enough. The NGOs have been doing a great deal for national development, including these areas of critical importance. Almost every day we hear and read news on human rights violations against women, children and people with disabilities. Also, corruption sometimes influences

decision-making in favour of influential people. A lack of transparency is evident here. Word and deed do not match. Lack of stewardship in the management of resources that belong to the people is absent. The rich become richer and the poor remain as poor. This is encouraged when state or government allows for impu-

nity to the violations of human rights. Crime should be answered by punishment. Justice must be ensured in a developing nation like ours, where the overwhelming majority of people are under the poverty level.

Citizens vote for representatives to form a government to ensure that there is "dushter domon o shister palon" in the society. Corrupt people are few in number, but their bad influence is colossal, adversely affecting lives of millions.

We longed patiently for a truly democratic government with a parliament, a judiciary and civil servants to inculcate the values of democracy and patriotism that will pave the way for a just society. There should not be biasness towards anyone. The rights of the poor, and the sinned-against should be upheld, especially for people who are weak and voiceless, so that there is impact-making influence on public policies, social attitudes and socio-political processes to enable, empower and transform the lives and attitude of the mass for the creation of a society that will value the sanctity of life. This is how human rights and justice can be maintained, and the same may not be trampled down by any influence. Let justice roll down like streams of water.

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## Unlocking the voice of women

The women need to be aware about their rights and raise their voices to apply and practice those fully. Age-old sentiments and unawareness of some men also create discrimination and violence against women.

PARVEZ BABUL

DECEMBER 10, 2009 is the 61st Human Rights Day. It commemorates the day in 1948 when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As per the Human Rights Monitoring Report on Bangladesh by Odhikar for the period 1-30 November, approximately 130 workers of the ready-made garments (RMG) sector were injured during clashes for demanding over-due wages, 27 females were reportedly raped, 25 women were reportedly subjected to dowry related violence, 3 women were reportedly

victims of acid throwing. This shows that girls and women are the main victims of human rights violation.

Articles 8-25(b) of our Constitution ensures participation of women in all spheres of national life. Article 27 says that all citizens are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of law. The Statement of Common Understanding of the United Nations mentioned says that human rights are universal and inalienable. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." Human rights are indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. All

human beings are entitled to their human rights, without discrimination of any kind. States are answerable for the observance of human rights. United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon said: "It is our duty to ensure that these rights are a living reality -- that they are known, understood and enjoyed by everyone, everywhere." The media are bringing about positive changes and supporting human rights development. It is important to empower female journalists and to encourage them to be active agents for all disadvantaged women of the society, and emphasise right-based development programs to address these issues and fight against climate change vulnerabilities, economic crises and other human rights related issues.

The Education Watch Report 2008 said that the literacy rate and the enrolment rate in primary schools in the country have declined. Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said that the main reason behind dropouts was poverty. The second Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aims to provide universal primary education by 2015. A rights-based approach takes care to identify and include vulnerable groups, and to respect existing rights to land. Priority for women's interests helps to overcome gender discrimination. In fact, the more the girls and women will be educated the more they will be aware about their human rights. So, to ensure education for all, provide safe accommodation, education assistance and protection from abuse for the girl children of sex workers also.

Most poor women of the world have been facing many problems and discrimination, and are denied constitutional rights. Even the girl children and women of rich families also face problems, but the pattern of violation and discrimination is different. We need to make efforts to solve the problems and create awareness about human rights. In reality, women's rights are violated

and women are discriminated against and deprived, but they do not have opportunity to say it to others. Their mouths and voices are locked by themselves and by others.

So, the women need to be aware about their rights and raise their voices to apply and practice those fully. Age-old sentiments and unawareness of some men also create discrimination and violence against women. Men must recognise women as human beings instead of treating, or thinking of, them as inferior to men.

Over population is a big problem in our country, but very few women can practice their rights in decision-making to build a planned family with one or two children. It is a common feature of many families in our country that many wives give birth to more children in accordance with the illogical wishes of husbands who want sons instead of daughters.

As a result, women's reproductive rights are violated, and they cannot raise their voice against early marriage or get primary health care/ treatment. Many women cannot eat nutritious foods during pregnancy and lactation without taking permission of their in-laws and husbands. But women who earn money can demand separation, divorce and remarriage.

So, women need jobs, or money to run a business. To be aware about their rights they need education, training and security. So, the government, private voluntary organisations, and conscious men and women should come forward and work on these issues. Awareness among men about women's rights need to be created so that men's support can help to create awareness among women. Make every household women-friendly and free from any type of discrimination and violence.

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## Ambedkar and rights of the dalits

Human rights and the name Ambedkar mingle in millions of minds of 'dalits' of the sub-continent. In fact 5 December was announced as the International Human Rights Day keeping in mind this rights warrior. The 'dalits' observe this occasion for five days with due esteem.

KANAILAL RABIDAS

HUMAN rights and the name Ambedkar mingle in millions of minds of 'dalits' of the sub-continent. The relentless fighter for emancipation of the oppressed millions Dr. Ambedkar breathed his last on December 6, 1956. In fact December 5 was announced as the International Human Rights Day keeping in mind this rights warrior. The 'dalits' observe this occasion for five days with due esteem.

Ambedkar was born to a poor cobbler family at Ambedabad village of Ratnagiri district in Maharashtra province of India. Back then the caste system was very strict in Hindu society sharply dividing it in four segments. And the minority upper caste ruled the vast majority lower caste with oppression and castigation.

He witnessed how his community and others like them who toil to provide comfort to and serve the 'rulers' of society suffered indignity in the latter's hand. He himself had this bitter experience being a lower (scheduled) caste untouchable at school.

However all this painful obstacles could not stop him. Rather he bore the brunt and strived forward. He became the first graduate among the dalits of the sub-continent. He pursued further study at Columbia University, USA and London School of Economics, UK. A prepared personality Dr. Ambedkar not only assumed leadership of the deprived and oppressed scheduled caste community but also became part of the leadership of the newly independent state.

He drafted the constitution of India and initiated reform against the oppressive and despicable caste system with the inclusion of individual liberty and equality of each citizen there. Whatever responsibilities and positions he had to assume in his political career he never ceased his struggle for emancipation of the poor, deprived and the backward classes of society from the ageold bondage of despoise.

Dr. Ambedkar said, "To me the interest of the country, specially that of its oppressed and deprived masses means much more than my life."

"Education, integrity and unity in struggle, can emancipate the oppressed and deprived in society. Get united and realise your rights."

Bangladesh being a part of the sub-continent there is a sizable population of the dalits also here. And the ghost of caste system in the form of discrimination also keeps them deprived of their human and constitutional rights. There must be some system initiated that can lead to their rights realisation. Some proposals:

- Initiating representation in the national parliament;
- Fixing proportionate quota in service;
- Reserving quota in all social, educational and religious trusts/boards;
- Providing khas land with formation of dalit rights commission.

These will make our democracy more meaningful leading to equality of all in line with Dr Ambedkar's universal philosophy.

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