

# Graft is human rights violation

## Rules Indian Supreme Court

IANS, New Delhi

The Supreme Court has said that the menace of "systemic corruption" violates human rights and only in exceptional circumstances should the courts put on hold convictions in such cases, even as the civil society battles graft by the high and mighty.

"Corruption is not only a punishable offence but also undermines human rights, indirectly violating them," said the apex court bench of Justice BS Chauhan and Justice Fakkir Mohamed Ibrahim Kalifulla in a judgment that has only now been made available.

Justice Chauhan said, "Systemic corruption is a human rights' violation in itself, as it leads to systematic economic crimes."

The appellate courts, the judgment cautioned, should exercise their power of putting a sentence and conviction in abeyance only in exceptional circumstances and exercise such powers "with great circumspection and restraint".

Even in exceptional circumstances, the court said that the power to suspend sentence and conviction should be exercised only when the convicted person satisfies the court "as regards the evil that is likely to befall him, if the said conviction is not suspended".

"The (appellate) court has to consider all the facts as are pleaded by the applicant, in a judicious manner and examine whether the facts and circumstances involved in the case are such, that they warrant such a course of action by it," the judgment said.

In the event of court staying the conviction then it must record its reasons for granting such a relief, the judgment said.



Princess Stephanie of Luxembourg and Prince Guillaume, hereditary Grand-Duke of Luxembourg, walk out of the Notre Dame cathedral of Luxembourg after their religious marriage yesterday. Crowned heads of Europe and ordinary citizens gathered for the tiny nation's biggest royal event in decades.

PHOTO: AFP

# Six Afghan cops killed in insider attack

REUTERS, Lashkar Gah

Six Afghan policemen were killed in Helmand province in a so-called "insider" attack involving a rogue Afghan policeman and a chef, local officials said yesterday.

The Taliban took responsibility for the attack, saying they had dispatched a "mujahid" who had infiltrated and penetrated the police ranks", spokesman Qari Yousuf Ahmadi said.

The policeman and chef working for the officers approached a police checkpoint in Helmand's Grishk district on Friday where they opened fire and shot dead two of their colleagues, the provincial governor's office said in a statement.

Police officials added that the chef previously attempted to kill the officers by poisoning their food.

Separately, two officials in Helmand district were ambushed and killed by insurgents.

# NEWS IN brief

## US president to be sworn in on Jan 21

PTI, Washington

The next US president to be elected through on November 6 polls will be sworn in on January 21 and not on the constitutionally mandated date of January 20, as it falls on a Sunday.

This will be only the seventh time in American history that the constitutionally mandated inauguration date has fallen on a Sunday. The last time it was during Ronald Reagan's second

## Murdoch to buy LA Times

GUARDIAN ONLINE

Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation is looking to bid for the Los Angeles Times, the paper has reported, adding Murdoch is also interested in buying its stablemate the Chicago Tribune from their parent company, the Tribune Company.

The Times said senior News sources confirmed the negotiations.

A bid for the LA Times alone could be worth as much as US\$400m, the paper said.

## Putin's foes to elect new leaders

BBC ONLINE

Opposition forces in Russia were holding a week-end-long national ballot yesterday to elect a leadership tasked with focusing the fight for fair elections.

Only a tiny fraction of Russia's voters have registered for the vote, which is being conducted both online and at polling stations. The opposition voters are due to elect 45 members of a Coordinating Council, choosing them from

## West Bank holds local polls

AFP, Ramallah

Palestinians in the West Bank cast ballots yesterday in local elections for their first vote since 2006 general elections, in a step boycotted by Gaza's Hamas rulers.

Just over half a million eligible voters are expected at 340 polling centres across the West Bank which opened at 7:00am and which will remain open for 12 hours, the Central Elections

## Kuwait's snap polls on Dec 1

AFP, Kuwait City

The Kuwaiti cabinet yesterday amended a controversial electoral law and set a December 1 date for snap polls, sparking angry opposition calls for demonstrations.

The snap polls are the second this year and the fifth since mid-2006 as parliament has repeatedly been dissolved because of political disputes.

## Kate named UK's dream Bond girl

ANI, London

The Duchess of Cambridge saw off competition from pop stars Rihanna and Beyonce to be crowned the ideal sidekick for James Bond.

Reality TV star Kim Kardashian and singer Cheryl Cole round out the top five in the survey for gadget website MenKind.co.uk

The poll was undertaken to celebrate the release of new Bond movie Skyfall, which hits cine-



## Myanmar to ease control over state media

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's state newspapers, long mouthpieces of the country's former junta and army hardliners, signalled a historic change in focus yesterday, announcing a plan to transform into "public service media".

Three state-owned dailies -- the English language New Light of Myanmar, its Burmese edition Myanma Alin and Kyemon (The Mirror) -- are set for a revamp, with a new governing body, the newspapers reported.

Myanmar's state press has shown scant signs of modernising -- except for an increase in celebrity gossip -- since the country began its reforms under a quasi-civilian regime last year.

The new governing body will slowly replace the information ministry in overseeing the state press.

## Pakistan failed to secure girls' edn rights: UN

TNN, New Delhi

Even as the joint statement from the team of doctors from the Queen Elizabeth and Birmingham Children's hospitals described Pakistan's teenage rights activist Malala Yousufzai's condition as "comfortable and stable" on Friday, a recent United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) revealed some startling facts about how the country has failed in protecting the right of education for girls and in reducing gender inequality.

While Pakistan Government announced Sitara-e-Shujaat, one of country's highest civilian awards for bravery, to 14-year-old Malala who was shot in the head by the Taliban for speaking out against the militants, the Unesco report stated that Pakistan, unlike others in the region such as India, Nepal and Bangladesh, has failed to reduce gender gaps over time.

The report stated that there are over three million girls in Pakistan who are out of school. Indicating at the global outcry



Malala Yousufzai

and support to Malala, Pauline Rose, director of the Global Monitoring Report (GMR) on Education for All (EFA) said: "It's tragic that it took violence for the world's attention to turn to the difficulties girls face in getting to school in Pakistan."

In the Swat district, where Malala is from, less than a third of girls are enrolled in school, leaving two thirds at home with little chance of fulfilling their dream. It is also a scandal to ignore girls' education when we know it benefits not just that one girl, but also has a huge impact on their household's health and income, and ultimately the future peace and prosperity of their country."

According to the Unesco's 10th Education for All Global Monitoring Report released on Tuesday, Pakistan is doing far worse in reducing gender gaps in comparison to other countries in the region. The report stated that 78 percent of the poorest girls were out of school in 1991 in Pakistan, a figure, which has only reduced to just 62 percent today (around 2/3).

## The poorest

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He cited Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2010 and said 17.6 percent of the population in Bangladesh live below the lower poverty line.

"Essentially this means that their total expenditure is insufficient to meet even the basic dietary requirements," said Risner of Shiree that works with two lakh poor people.

Shiree also found that the poorest people face five major challenges.

One of the challenges is exclusion from public services such as safety net schemes, education, health and livelihood support.

The other risks are inadequate economic opportunities; vulnerability to natural and man-made disasters; health and nutrition risks for women and girls, and gender and minority specific risks such as early marriage, dowry and discrimination.

Mahfuz Anam said the issues of the extreme poor can easily be marginalised because they are powerless and voiceless.

But improving their lives will be a great contribution to the cause of humanity, he observed.

Asif Saleh, senior direc-

tor (strategy, communications and capacity) of Brac, said the poorest people should be given assets and training so that they can come out of poverty.

Citing Brac's partnership with pharmaceutical company Renata for improving child nutrition, he said, "We need to find out areas for collaboration."

Urban poverty is a growing challenge. A lot of poor people are coming to the cities from rural areas, he said.

Kazi Zahin Hasan, a director of Kazi Farms Ltd, favoured a reduction in energy subsidy and said the money saved from subsidy cut should be given to education and safety net projects.

He also opposed the government's interest in reining in the prices of agricultural commodities. Zahin said it hurts farmers in the rural areas.

"If the farmers do not get better prices for food, they will grow something else," he said.

Tabith M Awal, deputy chief executive of Multimode Group, stressed the need for identifying the right sectors that can help generate income opportu-

nities for the poor.

He said private sector investments in agriculture and other fields in the rural areas can help reduce poverty.

Niaz Rahim, group director of Rahimafrooz, said the group works for providing direct market access to the farmers through its chain superstore Agora.

Rahim also suggested a planned use of money given as zakat by the affluent Muslims of the country.

Saree, lungi and other charities worth some Tk 16,000 crore is given as zakat every year, said Rahim, citing an estimate by an expatriate.

Gemcon Group Director Kazi Inam Ahmed said the construction of Jamuna Bridge encouraged establishment of more than 40 jute mills in the northern districts since 2000 and thus helped farmers get much higher prices for their produce.

Shamim Ahmed, a programme manager of WaterAid, and Shamim Ferdous, executive director of Bangladesh Protibondhi Foundation, a philanthropic organisation for the disabled, also spoke.

## Access to Nafis

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met with Deputy Assistant Attorney General Bruce C Swartz at the US Department of Justice on Friday.

"While reiterating the government's staunch stance against terrorism, the Ambassador (Akramul Qader) stressed that charges against Nafis notwithstanding, Bangladesh expects that his rights will be fully ensured in the interest of serving the ends of justice," said a foreign ministry statement.

The meeting was a follow-up to the official request made by the embassy to the State Department on October 17 seeking details of the case.

Bruce C Swartz informed the ambassador about the basis of the charges that led to the arrest by the FBI in a sting operation and Nafis's initial appearance before the Magistrate Judge in New York on October 17.

He said the US Federal Government had appointed a defence lawyer for the Bangladeshi youth.

The deputy assistant attorney general handed over a document containing the charges and a copy of the Bangladesh passport, bearing the number AA3810051, held by Nafis.

Senior officials of the Consular and South & Central Asia Bureaus of the US State Department and

## Hazare to launch new anti-graft team

ANI, New Delhi

Former senior Indian Police Service (IPS) officer Kiran Bedi yesterday said that veteran anti-corruption activist Anna Hazare will soon launch a new core team to fight the menace.

Bedi said that the new team would consist of individuals of known integrity and those whom he thought could take the anti-graft movement forward.

"Individuals, who are an institution themselves, be it retired civil servants, corporate honchos or artists, Anna is looking for a new inclusive core group with individuals, who are known for their non-partisanship and are reformist by nature," Bedi said.

Bedi said three individuals have already been identified, namely, former chief of army staff General V K Singh, former Uttar Pradesh DGP Prakash Singh and Bhure Lal, Amicus Curiae of the Supreme Court on examining social issues.

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