

Professor Dr. Mizanur Rahman



We all know that the December 10 is the Human Rights Day. As the Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Bangladesh is directly involved in the process, we also observe the day with befitting manner. Today, we have invited some personalities who are vocal for defending human rights in the country. We have invited the personalities in a very small scale, but with a special purpose. The excerpts of comments and recommendations will be published as special supplements in Bangla and English language newspapers. On behalf of the NHRC, I welcome you the all. I hope, the suggestions you will put here will guide the future journey of the NHRC. The topic of today's discussion is "Protected Human Rights for Prosperous Lives". The theme is equally applicable to our lives in 365 days. Human rights are important for every day. Now, I humbly request Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury to present thoughtful opinions.

Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury



What are human rights? Human rights are those belongings that bring fulfillment to the lives of human beings, and it is impossible to ensure better human life without it. But in human rights are being violated for different reasons in the world.

Many humanitarian individuals, organisations, including the United Nations, are trying to improve the scenario. They are working very hard.

Bangladesh government has formed a National Human Rights Commission to ensure our rights. I must thank the government of Bangladesh. The judicial system is trying their best to improve human rights in the country. When I was a part of the judicial system, I have noticed some of incidents of violation of human rights. Those problems had been solved with the help of the NHRC. I can remember one such incident, where a DIG kept seven children for illegal purpose. He got convicted and penalized with lifelong jail with five lac taka penalty. Another one is about some infants, wrongly putted in jail. They have untied as well. It is all happening because of kind supports from all human rights activists. When I see, so many people are working I feel very proud. But I must say we have to work hard, we have not got the desired result. Majority of our population are deprived of human rights facilities. The legal system of the country should be used to find a way to help those people. It can be said that lives can be changed and become prosperous by the protection of human rights. Lives can be changed toward positive direction through the protection of human rights, if the human rights workers, if the rights organisations, work with honesty and courage like Dr. Mizanur Rahman. I would like to propose the NHRC increase its awareness raising activities so that people can know about real meaning of human rights. I also request them to conduct the awareness raising activities at mosques, temples, churches, pagodas etc. I hope the NHRC will be able to succeed in protecting human rights and they will continue their journey.

Kazi Riazul Hoque



Child rights violation is one of the key strategic priorities of the National Human Rights Commission. Out of total population of the country 45 per cent age are below 18 i.e. they are the children. The state and society are responsible to protect the rights

of the children and also responsible to ensure their rights to food, education, health and shelter. In the light of the Bangladesh constitution of 1972, the children act was enacted in 1974 and subsequently children rules 1976 was adapted. But unfortunately these laws and rules have not been properly implemented yet. for the protection of the child rights. Bangladesh is one of the first 20 countries who ratified the Convention of Right of the Children. Any way we congratulate present government to start the process of enacting a new law in conformity with the CRC and the Children Act 2013 was enacted. Now the government should formulate the new children rules to ensure the proper implementation in order to present child rights. In this connection I would like to request all concern to look at the current scenario under privileged and working children in the country. Despite lot of achievement in children enrollment in school, child mortality, poverty reduction and other MDGs. Still there are almost 7.9 million children are engaged in formal and informal work, even in the hazardous job. It is known that more than 4 lakh children are working as domestic worker, which is in true scene violation of child rights – violation of human rights. It is also known more than 66% of our girls are being married before the 18 years of age. We urge the government and the society to come forward in order to protect the violence against children and ensure their basic rights.

Aroma Dutta

Secured human rights, desired life – that what we want to see in our real life. Violation of human rights is happening almost everywhere in the world. People from religious minority communities are not getting rid of it. I had an opportunity to work in a research for the NHRC. I found that people from the minority communities had been ignored in the process formulation since 1971. It seems that they do not exist at all. Without their inclusion in the process, how can we

can we ensure their human rights by talking big. Because this issue is completely ignored in the political discourse. They are



institutionally ignored. Now want to look at the percentage of participation of minority people in the state mechanism. If you look at the military forces, security forces and administration, you will find that the percentage is very trifling. In this context, what should we do? If the minority people do have their voices in the policy making process, can we protect their human rights? Can we reduce disparity? It is impossible. We are talking about reducing the disparity. But these issues should be presented before the people of the country. The NHRC can play a crucial role in that process. We the people who are working to ensuring human rights, how many of us try to understand the issue critically? I think, these issues should not be looked at scatteredly. We need a comprehensive understanding so that those can get the attention of policy makers. Bangladesh is often called as Muslim country. With the call, I really feel very much pain in my heart. I condemn this calling. I publicly condemn it. Bangladesh was never a Muslim country. This country belonged to Muslims, Hindu, Christian, Adivasi and all. We the people of Hill, land and plain land live with harmony. We were together in the 1971. We achieve the independence as we fought unitedly. So, why should call Bangladesh a Muslim country? By calling the country a Muslim country, the constitution is violated again and again. Does the land of the country contain the blood of the Muslims? There is no blood of Hindu, Christian and Adivasi in it? If we can protect our secular culture, the human rights of all will be ensured. I do not see Hindus and Muslims separately. I only believe that we are Bengali. It is our one and only identity. My first and last identity is that I am Bangali.

Professor Dr. M. Shah Alam



The human rights will not be protected only by observing a day. The human rights are applicable to the people's everyday lives. We have to be responsible for protecting the rights every day. And only then, the human rights will be established in the families, societies and in the state.

The human rights are violated in different ways, in different places and on different occasions. So, the individuals, the NGOs, and the state should stand from their respective positions, when there is violation of human rights. The human rights defenders are also not safe. So their rights to safety should also be ensured. They often fall victim to lack of their safety. We can see that most often human rights are violated in the name of religion, especially by misinterpretation of Islam. To stop the misinterpretation, the truth, the true information should be propagated. If the truth of Islam and its true teachings are represented properly, the evil activities of fundamentalists groups will be foiled. The teachings of Quran and Hadith are applicable to the Muslim's everyday lives. So, the true interpretations of the Quran and Hadith are very much important. Without the real interpretations, protecting human rights will not be possible, especially the rights of the women. The NHRC can include the issues in its awareness raising campaign programmes. With the success of the step, the lives of the people will certainly be changed.

M Hamid



Bangladesh has achieved its independence in 1971 through innumerable movements, struggles, bloodsheds and sacrifice of lives. Though the country has achieved the liberation through only nine months of war, the state has not been able to ensure the rights of the people till today. The people are still deprived of fundamental human rights. They are deprived of political, economic, social, religious, and cultural rights.

In this discussion, I want to shade the light on the issue of the lack of religious and cultural rights. We the all who are present here, we have got our religion by births. We have not accepted it consciously. In the case of raising voice about the freedom of choice to practice religions, many people fall victim to abuses or tortures in the country. In this situation, the religion creates a space of suppression. I feel, the freedom of religious practices is violated through this process

One the other hand, the social institutions like families and educational institutions put much emphasis on the religious practices in the country. But they do not put such emphasis in cultural practices. Some families give their children cultural lesions. But the overall situation of cultural education in the families is very poor. The same situation is prevailing in the country's educational institutions. So, the scope for the development of cultural of rights of the people should be created.

Today, the national anthem is not sung at many schools, though its mandatory for our national identity. We have failed to instill the deeper sense of the national flag and the national anthem in our young generation. If feel, it is one of the big barrier to the development of the nation. It is important to instill all the national values in our future generation. Moreover, we are going through a time when we facing a cultural aggression. This aggression is more violent and all spreading than ever. Because of the aggression, the cultural practices of small ethnic communities are getting narrow down. Their cultures are being destroyed. Their rights of culture are being violated. The rights should be protected. The country has created a history by sacrificing blood to ensure its rights to speak in its mother tongue. But there are very few initiatives to protect the languages and cultures of the ethnic minority communities of the country. Various estimations show that in every 15 days one language is being wiped out around the world. We also have many ethnic communities in the country. There is no strong initiative to protect the letters and languages of the communities. We need a comprehensive education system that incorporates the teachings-religion-languages-cultures of all communities, so that our future generation can grow up with a sense of a society of equity, and get the rights of giving their identities as member of an equity-based society and equity-based state.

Adv. Momtaj Begum



Most often, women are the victims of human rights violation in the country. No law will bring benefit to the people if there is no initiative to

raise awareness among them. The fundamentalists, anti-progressive and anti-women education forces are active in the country today. By presenting misinterpretation of the religions, they are trying to keep women confined in the houses. We want that the government, the NHRC take initiatives to stop the activities of the evil forces and raise awareness among the people especially women in the country. The women should be aware that the



Human Rights Day 2014

Marking the Human Rights Day 2014, the National Human Rights Commission (JAMAKON), Bangladesh organized a roundtable discussion on November 27. This publication is an excerpt of the discussion.

Protected Human Rights for Prosperious Life



constitution of the country has ensured the equal rights. Being aware of their rights, women can ensure their prosperous lives. The injustice begins from the early days of child in the country. Girls are given marriage before they understand the deeper aspects of lives. The reasons behind early marriage should be addressed properly. The problems should be removed. The country has got the independence, but the people, especially women, have not got the liberty. Getting the liberty is not possible without protecting the human rights. To ensure the protection of human rights, we must be free from illiteracy, poverty and ill health. To ensure the freedom, to ensure the liberty, we the all have to play our role from our own positions. And if we play the role, the human rights will be protected and a prosperous life will be ensured.

Khushi Kabir



We can see, the National Human Rights Commission has been trying its best to ensure human rights of the people in the country. The commission is

trying to raise awareness among the country's people by brining forward the human rights issues before them. But the question is, whether the NHRC has all the facilities needed to ensure the protected human rights and prosperous life. I think the NHRC is needed to strengthen to ensure the rights. The organization should be given more power. Its enforcement capacities and abilities should be increased. Otherwise, the targets and objectives will not be achieved only by giving lectures. The ombudsmen must have necessary power to be functional properly. S/he must have necessary scopes and environments to play the desired role. Only formulation and enactment of laws can not ensure human rights. The reasons behind violation of human rights, including the rights of the children, must be found out. In this discussion, the issue of culture of injustice has been discussed. It was said that the political culture of injustice is responsible for the violation of the human rights in the country. I also agree to the opinion. When the law enforcement agencies are used to help committing crimes, and they are not brought under the law, then they themselves are encouraged to commit crimes. The culture of injustice motivates to be engaged in the crimes. The human rights are being violated due to the climate change and the destruction of the environment, especially in the south-western region of the country. The NHRC should take into account the violation of human rights in the region also, and the issues should be reflected in its annual reports. Moreover, to protect our human rights, to ensure a prosperous life, fist we have to be aware ourselves, then we have to make aware the people whom we are living with, and if necessary we have to formulate laws. The people who are responsible for defending human rights, most often they provide wrong information. Sometimes, they misuse the laws. They are not brought und law and accountability.

Especially, when these misdeeds are done against the people of the country. To protect the human rights, these practices must be stopped. We feel, the NHRC should play more powerful role. If the county can ensure the human rights of the people, its dignity will go high.

Mesbah Kamal



We are saying that the issue of human rights is deeply related to the human dignity. If that is true, the question of good governance is deeply related to the issue of ensuring human rights. Good governance will never

be established without decentralization of the power and governance structure. To understand the issue, here I will discuss the governance system in Chittagong Hill Tracts. The decentralization is an important element of the CHT peace accord. Under the peace accord, the Chittagong Regional Council and the Chittagong District Council were established. After the peace accord, three separate laws were also passed for the CHT districts in 1998. The human rights of the CHT people will not be ensured if the institutions are not made functional. In the same way, the human rights of Adivasi communities in plain land will not be protected. According to the constitution, there are three type of ownership of properties - personal property, state property and co-operative property-in the country. But Adivasi people think that the land is a gift of the nature, and their communities own the land. The country's constitution has not recognized the idea of community ownership of the property. As a result, the state is encouraging the displacement of the adivasis. Vested interest groups are taking the opportunities. The situation has put an impact in the plain land also. So, I think, there is a need for a fundamental change in the constitution.

If we do not solve the problems, the human rights of the people will not be protected. So, it is needed to ensure the constitutional recognition of the rights of lands and forests of the adivasis, as the rights are also the parts of the human rights.

Ensuring the securities of the adivasis, especially the security of the adivasi women, is an important issue. Their right to security is also a human right. Today, rape has become a tool for grabbing land of adivasis in the CHT as well as in the plain land. The lands of the adivasis should be protected from grabbing. The human rights will not be protected if the adivasis do not control their lives themselves.

Sanjeeb Drong

It seems in the current context, the rights of indigenous community are not being considered as



human rights. Many of us believe that the rights of indigenous people are different from other. In fact, the rights of the indigenous community are same as entitled anyone.

The rights of the indigenous people are also human rights. Moreover, the United Nations adopted the Rights of Indigenous People with clear articulation in the universal declaration of human rights as economic, civil, political, social and cultural rights are also the rights of the indigenous people. These rights are not separate for indigenous people. The indigenous people are guided by the international standards of human rights for achieving their rights in regards to self determination, self identity, land rights, and ownership of the natural resources. In India the Indigenous Policy is adopted in 1959. India got independent in 1947, India formulated the policy within 12 years after their independence. The core value of the policy is 'indigenous touch'. You have to touch the people...also feel their rights by heart ...perceived them with modesty and purity...no pride, no domination. Why you termed the Garos or Santal as Bengali by the 15th Amendment of the constitution. The constitution must guarantee the rights of self identity of the indigenous community; guarantee the land rights of the indigenous community. Existing law is not enough to protect the rights of indigenous community. We demand to formulate new law entitled with the Act for protection of indigenous community rights. The indigenous communities of Tripura, Magalaya, Nagaland, Aunuracha of India are enjoying rights the rights of self determination. The point of self determination is clearly stated in the UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous People. We demand for the policy of indigenous community...we need separate land commission for indigenous community...need implement the Chittagong Hill Tract accord. Only through protecting the rights, the lives of the indigenous community can be enriched.

Dr. Rahmat Ullah



Bangladesh has been liberated on the basis of philosophy of humanity. To the protect the human rights, the characteristics, privileges, desires and

dreams human rights have been made clear in the structure of the constitution. The constitution has also promised to ensure the basic rights of the people. It also mentioned the duties and responsibilities to protect the human rights. According to our constitution, every individual in the country is entitled to equal right, there is no scope for discrimination. But it is a bitter truth that the state has failed to ensure the universal human rights. As a result, people from indigenous communities, lower class, middle class, poor and those who are deprived are trying raise their voice timidly. Bangladesh became independent on the foundation of two goals: Political liberty and economic freedom. Economic freedom is continuous process and a struggle. But we have not been able to achieve the desired level of liberty and freedom. Many factors have worked behind this. On the other hand, Bangladesh took positions in international spheres to implement the human rights issues. As signatory country, Bangladesh has to submit different report, projects on human. But in reality Bangladesh has stuck in those two stuffs only. Most of the commitments have not been implemented. That's why, the people could not be free from the deprivation of human rights. As discriminations are prevailing, the demands for protection of human rights are raising. The protect the human rights, it is important to implement the plans which have been taken in the law, justice, education, health sectors of the state.

The NHRC has to take the responsibility to eliminate the existing gap between the policy makers and people's aspiration regarding human rights issues. The state has to always active to protect the human rights. With the active role, the goals of the country's independence will be achieved. The country will become a state where equality and justice are ensured. And that's how Bangabandhu's Sonar Bangla Will be detectable. Human rights should be won and thank you all.

Sayed Ahmed



Today, the protection of human rights is an important issue around the world. We felt that the promotion of human rights

has profound impact on the livelihood of the people. But the impact has not always considered as positive. There is an opposite side of the phenomena which has strongly realized by the human rights defenders around the globe. Once, we all are motivated to set-out human rights standards. The states have given priority to set out the standards. At least, we can say that the state was willing to set out the human rights standards. Over the time, the states have changed its role. Today, the state has shifted its role and ignoring human rights standards which are set out by its own. These standards have been set-out throughout a long time struggle. We know the standards are the laws for the protection of human rights. Today, many of laws are formulating but many of these are not human rights friendly laws; moreover these law scaling-down the tune of human rights protection. These sorts of laws are limiting the boundaries for human rights defenders. In this context, the way of journey for human rights protection is getting new momentum. Although the human rights situation in Bangladesh is better than many of the countries in the world. The struggle for human rights protection is not issues for day...its contiguous effort.

Once, there was lack of awareness on the issue of protection of human rights among the human rights defenders and the mass people. The understanding has changed; people are now more aware and better position is now advantageous. We are now familiar with many of the human rights instruments and using these for the better protection of human rights. We are using the instruments for protection and simultaneously facing challenges from the state actors. These are not normal change; moreover these challenges jeopardize the life of the people. These are being addressed as common threats for human rights protection.

As we know, the state is mainly responsible to protect and promote human rights. Currently, the role of the state in protecting human rights creates a big challenge. In some cases, the non-state actors are sometime more powerful than the state actor. The trend of and activities of organized criminal groups and fundamental groups are rising and creating huge threat toward human rights. We recommend the National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh to play role for human defenders to protect human rights in the country. Thank you all.

Professor Dr. Mizanur Rahman

Today, we have seen from our discussion, as state body there are so many challenges of the National Human Rights Commission. In the difficult time, we have to overcome these obstacles to protect human rights and we are also working toward ensuring dignified lives for all citizens of the country. We do think, we have some achievements, despite having the challenges. We can always feel proud of achievements. How many countries are there in the world, those who can provide new books to eight million children in a certain time? And the children mesmerized with the fragrance of new books.

I do think we can be very proud of this. Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina promised that there will be no one left with lack of food by 2030 in the country. Now we can see country is moving towards achieving the goal. She made such promise, and said there will be no homeless people in the country; it is transformed into a middle income country. Even before that, she wants to ensure a shelter for everyone over their heads. She also wants to see none is deprived of medical facilities. The NHRC repeatedly requested her to include these to the constitution. Every people can get justice under any circumstances as the country is bound to provide the services, we requested her as well. We are also very proud that sinful crimes and criminal has come under the law. They have been punished and rest will be punished. This trial procedure is a prolonged process. We have seen, killers of the father of the nation have been punished. War criminal and human rights offenders are also being under scrutiny of the law. It is a extended procedure. But the trial has been facing several obstacles. Reluctant culture of not performing liabilities has been impassive to some extent. These all we can be proud of and delighted. And we are thankful to them those who has taken the responsibilities. On the human rights day, we are hopeful that government will be more conscious to remove the inequalities for citizens of the country. Honorable prime minister is not only the prime minister but also she is a daughter of our father of the nation. So the country's people have lots of expectation from her. As a matter of fact, people have more expectations from her and we are very optimistic about her success. We want to see her holy wishes come true and not become unholy at the implementation stage. We also wants see that she would put together to eliminate discrimination and promote civil rights. If she can do so as a result, whatever the community we belong to such as Muslim or Hindu or Christian or even Dalit will be able to sing from our heart 'Our Golden Bengal, We love you'. We hope our desires and wishes will come true. Thanks to all for being with us. ■